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Assessing the Techniques Used by Teachers of English in Teaching Vocabulary Contextually in Secondary Schools

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Abstract: This study aims at assessing the techniques that the teachers of English in secondary schools use in teaching vocabulary in secondary schools The current study hypothesizes that teachers of English vary in using different techniques in teaching vocabulary (i.e. there are differences in teachers' techniques in teaching vocabulary) , and the second hypothesis is : teachers suffer from teaching new vocabularies . This study is limited to techniques of teaching vocabulary used by teachers of   English in the secondary schools, for the academic year 2016-2017.   A sample of this study consists 30 teachers of English from Tikrit in secondary schools is involved in this study. A questionnaire is constructed to assess teachers techniques in teaching vocabulary. Finally, data are collected and analyzed statistically. The findings of this study reveal that there are various techniques used in teaching vocabulary in terms of the new series English for Iraq and they are different from a teacher to another and from class to another.

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تقويم الأساليب المستعملة من قبل مدرسي اللغة الانكليزية في تدريس المفردات اللغوية في المدارس الثانوية

الخلاصة: تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تقويم الأساليب التي يتبعها مدرسي اللغة الانكليزية في تدريس مفردات المنهج في المدارس الثانوية.

تفترض الدراسة أن مدرسي اللغة الانكليزية متنوعين في استعمال أساليب مختلفة في تدريس المفردات (أو بمعنى أخر يوجد اختلاف في الأساليب المتبعة في تدريس المفردات)، أما الفرضية الثانية فهي يعاني المدرسون من تدريس المفردات الحديثة. حدود هذه الدراسة هي : (أ) الأساليب المستخدمة في تدريس مفردات المنهج في المدارس الثانوية في تكريت للسنة الدراسة 2017 - 2016.

تتكون عينة الدراسة من 30 مدرسا لمادة اللغة الانكليزية في المدارس الثانوية . تم بناء استبيان لتقويم أساليب المدرسين في تدريس المفردات . وفي النهاية جمعت البيانات ثم تم تحليلها إحصائيا. اظهرت نتائج هذه الدراسة وجود أساليب متنوعة وعديدة في تدريس المفردات ، وتختلف من مدرس إلى أخر ومن صف إلى أخر.

الكلمات المفتاحية: أساليب، التدريس، المجرسون، المفردات.

1.Introduction

1.1   The Problem of the Study

Vocabulary has a major responsibility in English language acquisition, particularly for secondary school students. It is actually a essential period when it comes to students' enhancement to use English properly . During the process of vocabulary learning, it is necessary to discover the meaning of a particular word, but also all the features of the word. There are several points learners need to know about details of new vocabulary like : class of the word , register , frequent existence in utterance , semantic status ,and morphological structure. Moreover, what is the equivalent statements or word in the target language (Taylor, 1990 : 1).

The suitability of the techniques used in teaching new vocabulary in classrooms leads to facilitate learning process .Furthermore , if teachers leave students learn or acquire vocabulary by chance , by repetition or even by their privet efforts will not achieve the appropriate target of teaching the specific skills.

Aitchison (2003:5) clarifies that words are categorized and systemized in learners' minds in learning any language   and there are many approaches leads to carry out the learning process . For this reason ,the most important thing is to be aware of the association of lexicon to acquire vocabulary more successfully.

Teaching methods nowadays used in   classrooms represent traditional aproaches , the teacher teaches students with the method that is suitable to them not to students with less efforts. In this case, some learners can acquire the language effectively while others fail. The same learning technique may be functional for some students but a waste of time for others . It means that the teachers and students should master some vocabulary learning techniques to make their second or foreign learning more successful (Wenden & Rubin, 1987: xvii).

1.2 The aims of the Study

This study aims at assessing   the techniques that the teachers of English use in teaching vocabulary in secondary schools.

1.3 The hypotheses of the Study

The hypotheses of this study demonstrates on the following:

1- Teachers of English vary in using different techniques in teaching vocabulary.

2- teachers suffer from teaching new vocabularies.

1.4 Limits of the Study

This study is limited to techniques of teaching vocabulary used by teachers of   English in the secondary schools, for the academic year 2016-2017.

1.5 Definitions of Basic Terms

1- Assessment :is " the measurement of the ability of a person or the quality or success of a teaching course, etc. " (Richards et al , 1992 : 23).

Operational Definition: assessment here means to assess teaching techniques used in teaching vocabulary .

2-Teaching:is undertaking certain ethical tasks or activities the intention is to induce learning (B.O.Smith).While Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines teaching as the job or profession of a teacher ,it refers to something which is taught by a person like ideas or beliefs .

Operational Definition : teaching here means to teaching English vocabularies through English classes in secondary schools.

 3-Vocabulary is a set of words that have something other than their linguistic form ,function ,or meaning in common (Kuiper and Allan , 1996:208) .

2-0 Theoretical Background

2.1 Vocabulary Learning

There are many studies about the significance of vocabulary in language learning. Early vocabulary awareness is shown to be a strong predictor of school progress in the first language (L1). Also many studies find that vocabulary knowledge is particularly important in reading achievement(Nurhemida , 2007: 4).

Vocabulary is regarded as one element that links the four skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing all together. In order to communicate well in a foreign language, students should acquire an adequate number of words and should know how to use them accurately (Huyen and Nga , 2003 : 2).

Recently learners of foreign languages appreciate the value of vocabulary but most of the time they are passive in classrooms and teachers do every thing.

The reasons are a teacher explain meanings or definitions, pronunciation, spelling and grammatical functions .Students think that they need only the primary meaning or the stem of

the new words .The other case that students acquire new words only when they see them in reading passages or situations .

The last reason is students don't want to take risks in practicing new words(ibid).

Aitchison (2003: 43) clarifies the association between the meaning of new word and the thing learners need to learn. Firstly , learners translate an object in real life into ideas, for example *sun, sky* reflect the external world only , in that there is likely to be extensive concord over what they are, even between people speaking various languages. Secondly, to look at the meaning of a word as associate with the concept widely   . In general the thought may expand further than the sections characterized with a word .

Nurhamedia (2007 : 5) lists   different techniques in which a   any learner learns vocabulary in first or second language as it is shown in table (1):

Table (1)

Techniques Used in Classrooms

SQ	TECHNIQUE	SKILLS
1	Experiential learning	Reading and listening
2	Memorizing	Matching words to pictures(by speaking and writing)
3	Repetition	Practicing previous words

All the mentioned skills have been practiced frequently in classrooms of second or foreign language .Consequently , their importance can be placed due to learners' preference in practice . Reading and listing comprehension enlarge learners imagination and enforce them to discover vocabulary contextually. Whereas ,   the second technique is regarded easier , enjoyable and doesn't need a lot of time to be practice . The last one can be carried out by asking student to use worksheets to practice repeating new words either by putting them in sentences or writing their meaning in the mother tongue .

Learners must deal with unfamiliar vocabulary during language acquisition. In order to learn and retain new words, learners must engage in classroom activities based on a different task s like guessing , gap filling   or describing a conversation. These activities also include vocabulary games which lead learners to develop and use words in various contexts through

entertaining lessons. As a result, it is necessary to observe whether students learn vocabulary efficiently through games and how they learn (Huyen and Nga , 2003, 3).

Carlisle (1995 : 194) defines morphological awareness as "children's conscious awareness of the morphemic structure of words and their ability to reflect on and manipulate that structure". Learning about the morphemic structure of words is considered as a familiar and important   technique in practicing new words. Knowledge of both derivational and inflectional morphemes plays a great and central role in improving quantity of the vocabulary for learning English language sooner.

Carranza et al (2015:52) list techniques that can be the core of learning vocabulary ,these techniques are:

1- Context clues
2- word analysis
3- dictionary skills i.e. Use the dictionary to unlock unfamiliar words.
4- Read books and other materials of your interest.
5- List down words with their meaning and use them in speaking and writing
6- Learn the meaning of new words through structural analysis.
7- Connect the words to some common prefixes and suffixes to form new words.
8- Work crossword puzzle .
9- Play word find game.

2.1.1Vocabulary Types

Thornbury (2007 :12) states that a word is a more complex phenomenon than at first it might appear . for example :

1-Words have different functions ,some carrying mainly grammatical meaning ,while others bear a greater informational load .e.g. the word (*go*) means move forward or backward

2-the same word can have a variety of forms .e.g. *watch* has verb and noun forms.

3- words can be added to , or combined , to form new words .e.g. (take part) are two different words come together to form one meaning .

4-Words can group together to form units that behave as if they were single words e.g.(come up with) three words to express a target meaning *reach*.

5-many words commonly co-occur with other words e.g. describing words (adjectives)that may describe one noun.

6- words may look and/or sound the same but have quiet different meanings .e.g. (meat/meat) , (see / sea) , (by / buy) ,(ate / eight)…etc.

7-one word may have a variety of overlapping meanings .

8-different meanings my share similar meanings ,or may have opposite meanings .e.g. (poor / rich) , (big / small) , (lazy/ clever)…etc.

9-learners can face several words that are related to each other or have relationship with other word ,for example ,they belong to the same set ,or co-occur in similar texts.

10-some words have different phonemes or letters while they have similar meanings and these can be used in different situations, or for different effects.

Yates (2006 :viii) claims that , the words of a language can be divided into two groups : content words and function words .Content words in English are either nouns- words that name people , things ,places ,or abstracts ; adjectives- words that describe nouns ;verbs-words that describe the actions of nouns ; or adverbs-words that describe how an action is performed . Function words are structure that enables us to put the content words together to make sense . English function words consist of, for example , words such as *and, the , for , a* ,and *of* -words that would be hard to describe a word . Both kinds of words that would be difficult to draw a picture of or to define in a word or two . Both types of words have great role in language communication .

2.2 Previous Studies
2.2.1 Ferguson (2006)

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of explicity in teaching vocabulary by using morphemic analysis on the comprehension of learning new terms or words .

Eighteen learners of 6th class are chosen to be the sample of the study , who are weak in reading .The procedures followed in the study is pre and post test to assess the effect of this method on vocabulary learning.

Findings of the study reveal advanced post test results, but no noticeable enlargement on students transference   words .

2.2.2 Riankamol (2008)

The study aims at investigating techniques used in English vocabulary learning used by English gifted learners in "Triam Udomsuksa School" . The subjects are twenty seven learners who study in English gifted program . The tool of the study is a questionnaire of twenty five items which are written due to Schmitt's taxonomy of the techniques concerned with vocabulary learning. The mean score showed that using of Meta-cognitive techniques are the highest one used by English gifted learners who are considered high talented learners in English. Whereas, the least frequently used vocabulary strategy is "learning words by listening to vocabulary CDs " in Cognitive strategies. On the other hand, the conclusions show that teachers improve effective vocabulary teaching and by supporting learners with practical learning techniques .

2.2.3 Discussion of Previous Studies

The aim of **Ferguson (2006)** is to investigate explicit teaching of morphemic analysis on vocabulary learning and comprehension and its transfer effects to novel words with sixth grade students .Whereas , the aim of **Riankamol** study **(2008)** aims at investigating learning strategies in English vocabulary. While , the aim of the current study is to investigate the techniques that the teachers of English use in teaching vocabulary.

The sample of **Ferguson (2006)** is eighteens students ,and the sample of **Riankamol (2008)** is twenty seven ,and the sample of the present study is twenty five teachers of English .So ,**Riankamol (2008)** is similar to the present study in the number of the sample and the instrument of the study .

Feurgosen results reveal high posttest marks . Concerning Riankamol findings ,they reveal the use of Meta-cognitive techniques are most frequently used by English gifted learners , whereas "I learn words by listening to vocabulary CDs " is the least frequent among the other techniques . Whereas the results of the current study reveal that the mastered techniques always used in classrooms through teaching vocabulary are using synonyms , more practice of new words and discovering new vocabulary textually .

3 - The Procedures

3.1 Population

Population can be defined as " any group of individuals that has one or more characteristics in common" (Best et al , 2006:13) .   The present study has chosen a population that involve   teachers of English language in secondary schools in Tikrit city . A sample of 30 teachers of English language in secondary schools has been chosen for the current study. They include 9 male teachers and 21 female teachers , during the academic year 2016-2017, as shown in Table(2) .

Table (2) Population and Sample

Population	Sample	
72	30	
	male	Female
	9	21

3.2 The Study Tool

A questionnaire of vocabulary teaching techniques is constructed, so as to obtain the required data of the present study.

The questionnaire consists of twenty items to investigate different procedures , activities and techniques used by teachers in teaching vocabulary and problems facing both teacher and learner in English classes.

The items of the questionnaire include multiple choice items (always , sometimes ,and never) questions which are regarded as multiple choice questions with three options , as they are mentioned in Appendix (A).

" The tool is valid if it measures accurately what it is supposed to measure" (Fulcher, 2010:19) .Validity of the questionnaire is the degree to which a study and its results correctly lead to, or support, exactly what is claimed. Generally, validity refers to the appropriateness, meaningfulness, correctness, and usefulness of the inferences a researcher makes(Tavakoli, 2012 :699).

The questionnaire has been shown to a jury of experts from Tikrit University who are university teaching staff members in order to confirm the face validity of its items . They are required to point out   advices, remarks, and suggestions about the appropriateness of the questionnaire details .

Gipps (2003 : 68) and Fautley (2010 : 11) state that reliability is concerned with the accuracy with which the test measures the skill or attainment it is designed to measure .

So as to find out the reliability of questionnaire, Persons Correlation Coefficient formula is used by using split – half method. The questionnaire is reliable since its reliability is 0.81 ,which is regarded as an acceptable value .

4 - Analyzing Data

4.1 Teachers' Responses in the Questionnaire Items

The following statistical values have been found out after gathering data and measuring the frequencies of the questionnaire items , as it is shown in table (2).

Table (2)

Values of The Sample Responses in the Questionnaire Items

Items No.	always %	Sometimes %	Never %
1	28.57%	57.14%	14.28%
2	50 %	35.71%	14.28 %
3	64.28%	28.57%	0.00 %
4	28.57%	57.14%	14.28%
5	42.85%	42.85%	14.28%
6	57.14%	42.85%	0.00%
7	35.71%	57.14%	7.14%
8	28.57%	71.42%	0.00%
9	35.71%	64.28%	0.00%
10	85.71%	14.28%	0.00%
11	50 %	42.85 %	14.28 %
12	57.14 %	42.85 %	0.00 %
13	14.28 %	50 %	28.57 %
14	28.57 %	57.14 %	14.28 %
15	28.57 %	57.14 %	14.28 %
16	28.57 %	64.28 %	14.28 %

17	7.14 %	57.14 %	28.57 %
18	28.57 %	50 %	14.28 %
19	85.71 %	14.28 %	0.00%
20	7.14 %	85.71 %	7.14 %

The collected values of the questionnaire items are summed up in the following points:

1- It is found that 57.14% of the respondents sometimes ask students use bilingual dictionary to help them to translate English words into Arabic language.

2- 50 % of the participants always use pictures illustrated in the textbook to explain the word meanings.

3- It has been noticed that teachers identify the class of new words or stems   while teaching their details like synonyms or related words . 64.28% said that they always use this method .

4- 57.14%   participants of the questionnaire sometimes ask their students to translate the words into Arabic and vs.

5- Students are required to put an unidentified word into a sentence to support them comprehend the word meaning 42.85% always achieve this activity.

6- Student may ask his/her classmate for word meaning. 57.14% of the respondents always notice this item.

7- Sometimes students learn English in group work tasks 57.14% of the sample agree to this point.

8- Most of the participants encourage students to use social media to increase vocabulary learning .71.42% of them sometimes do it.

9- Teachers teach words about the culture of English speaking countries. 64.28% of the respondents always teach using this way.

10- 85.71% of the participants always explain new words by using synonymous words or related words .

11- Half of the teachers always use physical actions when teach new vocabulary (body language) .The percentage is 50 % .

12- 57.14 % of the respondents frequently ask students to practise new words and always keep doing this matter.

13 -Teachers teach a new word using coloured cards so students can learn and not forget it. 50 % sometimes teach vocabulary using flash cards.

14 - 57.14 % of the participants sometimes teach words by listening to vocabulary CDs   .

15- Respondents ask students to record in their notebook vocabulary from English soundtracks or movies the percentage is 57.14 % .

16 - When students do not remember a word, their teacher ask them to write or say it continually. 64.28 % sometimes follow this way.

17- It has been found that the respondents present to their students English songs, short stories, and news. 57.14 % say that they sometimes use these activities.

18 - 50 % of the teachers marked that they sometimes ask their students to memorize word from English magazines , food packages ,clothes sacks …etc.

19- Encouraging students not worry very much about the difficult words found when reading or listening, student may pass them   85.71 % of the sample always do to this item.

20 -   85.71 % of the participants in the questionnaire marked that their students sometimes find out some vocabulary when comprehend the text .i.e. (contextually) .

4.2 Ranking Teachers' Responses

After collecting data and analyzing them statistically by using the percentages of the frequencies of questionnaire items , it is found that the items are in the following order . Table (4) shows the rank of the items of the questionnaire according to respondents point of view and attitudes concerning teaching social topics .

Table (4)

Ranking Questionnaire Items

Sq		Item	Item response	
1.	10	I explain new words by using synonymous words or related words .	85.71%	Always
2.	19	I tell my students to risk taking and practice difficult words while reading or listening.	85.71%	Always
3.	20	Do you notice that students find out some vocabulary when comprehend the text .i.e. (contextually)	85.71%	Sometimes
4.	8	I encourage students to use social media to increase vocabulary learning.	71.42%	Sometimes
5.	3	Identifying the class of the taught words.	64.28%	Always
6.	9	Explaining the words that reflect the culture of the target language.	64.28%	Sometimes

7	16	When students do not remember a word, I ask them to write or say it continually.	64.28%	Sometimes
8	1	Students use bilingual dictionary to help them to translate English words into Arabic language.	57.14%	Sometimes
9	4	I ask my students to translate the words into Arabic and vs.	57.14%	Sometimes
10	6	Student may ask his\her classmate for word meaning	57.14%	Always
11	7	Students practice English in group work activities.	57.14%	Sometimes
12	12	I frequently ask students to practise new words.	57.14%	Always
13	14	I teach words by listening to vocabulary CDs.	57.14%	Sometimes
14	15	I ask students to record in their notebook vocabulary from English soundtracks or movies .	57.14%	Sometimes
15	17	I present to my students English songs, short stories, and news.	57.14%	Sometimes
16	2	Teachers use pictures found in the textbook to refer to new vocabularies.	50%	Always
17	11	I use physical actions when teach new vocabulary (body language) .	50%	Always
18	13	I write a new word on a flash card so students can remember it.	50%	Sometimes
19	18	I ask my students to memorize word from English magazines , food packages ,clothes sacks …etc.	50%	Sometimes
20	5	I ask the students to put an unknown word into a sentence to help them understand the word meaning.	42.85%	Always

4. Discussion of the Results of the Questionnaire

Through reviewing the results of the questionnaire, it reveals that teachers techniques are different from one to another. Most of them prefer teaching vocabulary not in a direct way but contextually or frequently by using various techniques .So the first hypothesis is accepted .

It is really hard for teachers to choose specific or practical technique for teaching their students according to teaching criteria of vocabulary . Also , teachers suffer from some factors like size of class , lack of technology ,and students' level of intelligence .

Each technique used in teaching vocabulary suits specific class or environment like the size of class , the level of students , the visual aids used and so on .

It has been found that the highest number of the teachers prefer using synonyms of words or by saying or writing words which are related to the new word they would like to teach. The second item which got high percentage is most of the teachers always encourage

their students through practicing activities or acquiring novel words .While the third high percentage is on the behalf of learning new words contextually .

The techniques that are used in teaching vocabulary from time to time are: telling students about the culture of the target language, identifying the part of speech , using social media , writing new words continually to remember them, using bilingual dictionary , group working ,and making students listen to new words on CDs .

The techniques which are rarely used in classrooms are using body language(imitation) , putting a word in a sentence ,and asking students to memorize words from market objects like clothes or food or anything else.

5-Conclusions

The applications of the constructed questionnaire to the samples of this study have led the following conclusions:

1- There are numerous techniques used in teaching vocabulary in terms of the new series <u>English for Iraq</u> and they are different from a teacher to another and from class to another.

2- The mastered techniques always used in classrooms through teaching vocabulary are using synonyms , more practice of new words and discovering new vocabulary textually .

3- Teachers of English who teach in secondary schools have different point of views towards the importance or role of each techniques .They think that each technique suits specific class or environment like the size of class or the level …etc.

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Questionnaire of Vocabulary Teaching Techniques

Sq	Item	Item response		
		Always	**sometimes**	**Never**
1.	Students use bilingual dictionary to help them to translate English words into Arabic language.			
2.	I use pictures illustrated in the textbook to explain the word meanings.			
3.	I teach meaning of words by identifying its part of speech.			
4.	I ask my students to translate the words into Arabic and vs.			
5.	I ask the students to put an unknown word into a sentence to help them understand the word meaning.			
6.	student may ask his\her classmate for word meaning			
7	Students practice English in group work activities.			
8	I encourage students to use social media to increase vocabulary learning.			
9	I teach words about the culture of English speaking countries.			
10	I explain new words by using synonymous words or related words .			
11	I use physical actions when teach new vocabulary (body language) .			
12	I frequently ask students to practise novel vocabulary.			
13	I write a new word on a flash card so students can remember it.			
14	I teach words by listening to new terms by using visual aids or audio tracks of CDs.			
15	I ask students to record in their notebook vocabulary from English soundtracks or movies .			
16	When students forget the meaning a word vocabulary, I ask them to practice it orally or by writing it continually.			
17	I present to my students English songs, short stories, and news.			
18	I ask my students to memorize word from English magazines , food packages ,clothes sacks …etc.			
19	I encourage my students to risk taking while learning new vocabulary .			
20	do you notice that students find out some vocabulary when comprehend the text .i.e. (contextually)			

تقويم الأساليب المستعملة من قبل مدرسي اللغة الانكليزية في تدريس المفردات اللغوية في المدارس الثانوية

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المستخلص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تقويم الأساليب التي يتبعها مدرسي اللغة الانكليزية في تدريس مفردات المنهج في المدارس الثانوية.

تفترض الدراسة أن مدرسي اللغة الانكليزية متنوعين في استعمال أساليب مختلفة في تـدريس المفـردات (أو بمعنـى أخـر يوجـد اخـتلاف فـي الأسـاليب المتبعـة فـي تـدريس المفردات)، أما الفرضية الثانية فهي يعاني المدرسون من تدريس المفردات الحديثة. حدود هذه الدراسة هي : (أ) الأساليب المستخدمة في تدريس مفردات المنهج في المدارس الثانويـة في تكريت للسنة الدراسة 2017 - 2016.

تتكون عينة الدراسة من 30 مدرسا لمادة اللغة الانكليزية في المدارس الثانوية . تم بناء استبيان لتقويم أساليب المدرسين في تدريس المفردات . وفي النهاية جمعت البيانات ثم تم تحليلها إحصائيا . اظهرت نتائج هذه الدراسة وجود أساليب متنوعة وعديدة في تدريس المفردات ، وتختلف من مدرس إلى أخر ومن صف إلى أخر.

الكلمات المفتاحية: أساليب، التدريس، المجرسون، المفردات.