A study on the effect of separate versus integrated vocabulary learning strategies instruction on Iranian male and female EFL learners' vocabulary learning

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By

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Abstrak

Satu Kajian Kes Kesan Pengajaran Strategi Pembelajaran Kosa Kata Secara Berasingan Dan Berintegrasi Terhadap Pembelajaran Kosa Kota Pelajar Lelaki Dan Perempuan Iran

Memandangkan penyelidikan tentang keberkesanan strategi pembelajaran berdasarkan kaedah bersepadu dan kaedah berasingan belum tuntas dan juga dapatan para penyelidik yang menegaskan bahawa pelajar perempuan menunjukkan pencapaian yang berbeza daripada pelajar lelaki di dalam kelas bahasa kerana mereka menggunakan strategi pembelajaran bahasa yang berbeza, maka kajian ini meneliti sama ada kaedah bersepadu ataupun kaedah berasingan yang lebih berkesan dalam pengajaran strategi pembelajaran bahasa dalam kalangan pelajar lelaki dan perempuan sekolah tinggi di Iran. Seramai seratus lima puluh orang pelajar sekolah tinggi tahap tiga daripada enam kelas di dua buah sekolah tinggi lelaki dan perempuan terlibat dalam kajian ini. Terdapat seramai lima puluh orang pelajar dalam dua kumpulan kawalan dan seramai seratus orang pelajar dalam empat kumpulan eksperimen.

Pelajar daripada kumpulan kawalan dan kumpulan eksperimen masing-masing menduduki praujian kosa kata. Seterusnya, soal selidik strategi pembelajaran bahasa Schmitt (1999) telah dijalankan terhadap kumpulan eksperimen dan strategi yang sesuai untuk dipelajari oleh mereka telah dipilih. Strategi yang dipilih mengambil kira kecenderungan penggunaaannya dalam kalangan subjek kajian. Dalam penggunaan kaedah bersepadu, strategi yang dipilih itu diajarkan oleh guru kepada kelas pelajar perempuan dan kelas pelajar lelaki bersama-sama dalam pengajaran di dalam kelas bahasa Inggeris yang biasa. Untuk memerhatikan kaedah berasingan, penyelidik mengajarkan strategi-strategi terpilih kepada kelas pelajar perempuan dan kelas pelajar lelaki di dalam kelas berasingan daripada kelas bahasa Inggeris yang biasa diikuti. Pemerhatian ini dilakukan selama enam sesi pada dua minggu pertama semester. Guru yang sama yang menggunakan pendekatan pengajaran tradisional dan pendekatan bersepadu mengendalikan kelas bahasa Inggeris yang biasa untuk kumpulan kawalan. Pada akhir semester, semua pelajar daripada kumpulan eksperimen dan kumpulan kawalan menduduki pascaujian kosa kata dan keberkesanan pengajaran strategi pembelajaran kosa kata ditentukan. Kaedah berasingan didapati lebih efektif dalam kalangan pelajar perempuan dan kaedah bersepadu lebih efektif dalam kalangan pelajar lelaki. Begitu juga, temu bual yang dilakukan telah selanjutnya mengesahkan dapatan kajian.

Abstract

A study on the effect of separate versus integrated vocabulary learning strategies instruction on Iranian male and female EFL learners' vocabulary learning

As research on the effectiveness of integrated and separate methods of learning strategies is inconclusive and researchers have determined that female and male students perform differently in language classes and use different strategies for learning a language, this study examines which method, integrated or separate, is more effective for teaching vocabulary learning strategies to Iranian male and female high school students. One hundred and fifty third grade high school students from six classes in two large boys and girls high schools were involved in the study during the spring semester. There were fifty students in two control groups and one hundred in four experimental groups.

Both the control and experimental groups received the vocabulary pre-test. Subsequently, Schmitt's (1999) vocabulary learning strategies questionnaire was administered to the experimental groups and the strategies that were appropriate to be learned by the subjects were selected. The strategies were selected considering the way the subjects claimed they used them. For utilizing the integrated method the selected strategies were taught by a teacher to a girls' class and a boys' class along with their regular English class sessions. For administering the separate method, the researcher taught the selected strategies to a girls' class and a boys' class in separate classes from the regular English language classes. This took six sessions during the first two weeks of the semester. The same teacher who utilized a traditional teaching approach with the control groups and the integrated approach ran the regular English language class for the separate group. At the end of the semester all the experimental and control groups received a vocabulary post-test and the effectiveness of vocabulary learning strategies instruction was determined. The separate method was found to be more effective for the female students and the integrated one was more effective for the males. In addition, interviews were conducted that further corroborated the results.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1. Introduction

A review of books and journals written on teaching and learning processes reveals that researchers in the field of second language acquisition have turned away from a teacher-centred perspective of the language learning process to one that is more learner-centred in which learners have an active role in the process. Researchers have shifted their attention from how to teach to examine what successful learners do to learn a language and have attempted to list different language learning strategies used by these successful learners and constructed frameworks and taxonomies for language learning strategies (Oxford, 1990, Schmitt and Schmitt, 1993, Chamot and O'Malley 1994).

This study along other studies that have been done on language learning strategies tries to shed some light on a particular area of language learning strategies research, namely, vocabulary learning strategies. It examines the effect of separate and integrated vocabulary learning strategies instruction in English vocabulary learning by Iranian male and female EFL learners. This chapter presents the purpose of the study and explains the background to reveal the significance of the phenomenon at hand, namely, learning strategies and strategy instruction. This will be followed by the research questions that the study sets out to answer. Finally, the key terms will be defined.

1.2 Background to the study

The basic blocks of a language are words. Words combine together and make sentences and paragraphs (Read, 2000). Words are complex and dictionaries can prove this complexity. Dictionaries alert us that words are a complex linguistic phenomenon and may have several definitions, and that grammatical functions may be used differently with some particular words (Macaro, 2003). As Nation (2001) points out, the concept of words is so complex that on the base of a single basic definition of word, one is not able to tell if an item is a word or a combination of several words. A word needs to be defined, considering its various forms and functions. As a result researchers define words by differentiating their orthographical and phonological forms and defining lexical items, dictionary forms, grammatical word forms, inflectional and derivational words, multi-part and discontinuous words like phrasal verbs and prepositional verbs, content words and grammatical words. Also they define short forms and differentiate between abbreviations, logograms, contractions, acronyms and clipped forms (Nation, 2001).

Equally complex is the question of what we know about a word and how many words we need to know. As Nation (2001) notes there are many things to know about any particular word and there are many degrees of knowing a word. As Nation (2001) notes, knowing a word involves knowing its form, meaning and use. He asserts that to read with minimal disturbance language users probably need a vocabulary of 15,000 to 20,000 words.

With regard to its complexity, vocabulary is the first priority of both language teachers and language learners. For many language learners, learning a language means mastery of its vocabulary (Macaro, 2003 and Read, 2000). Even advanced language learners are aware of the gap in their lexical knowledge and the fact that they cannot express their intentions through a second language as they do in their first language. Unlike second language speakers, native speakers learn a large portion of their first language vocabulary during their childhood continue to develop their vocabulary knowledge as they encounter new experiences and inventions (Read, 2000). On the importance of vocabulary, McCarthy (1990) asserts that without words communication in a second language will not happen. Learners who know more vocabulary can read and speak with less interruption allowing them to communicate with the world more effectively and gain a sense of achievement (Macaro, 2003).

In the past the attention was on repetition, rote learning and structural drilling and vocabulary acquisition was overlooked. However, as the communicative approach emerged in the 1970s researchers' attention turned away from syntax to vocabulary (Schmitt, 1993). In the 1970s and 1980s researchers emphasized implicit and incidental vocabulary learning although several studies proved the ineffectiveness of solely implicit vocabulary learning as it is not able to provide a rich context. Thus, more explicit vocabulary instruction was integrated in the second language classrooms (Sokmen, 1997). As in Sokmen (1997:239) "the pendulum has swung from direct teaching of vocabulary (the grammar translation method) to incidental (the communicative approach) and now, laudably, back to the middle: implicit and explicit learning".

Although the trend has changed towards a more systematic approach to vocabulary learning, vocabulary is known as the least systematized aspect of learning a foreign language and it is not systematically incorporated into foreign language courses (McCarthy, 1990 and Macaro, 2003). The way to overcome this problem is by giving learners strategy training and making learners more responsible for their own learning (McCarthy, 1990).

Since the 1970s a change also happened in the way teachers and learners were viewed. In the late 70s and early 80s, the attention of second language acquisition research turned away from a teaching-centred perspective "to one which includes interest in how the actions of learners might affect their acquisition of language" (Schmitt 1997:199). In other words, the idea that learners' effort is the main factor in the language learning process was gradually formed among the scholars. Prior to this, the teacher was considered as the one who provides knowledge and students had a passive role in the learning process. In light of the communicative approach learners are expected to have an active role in learning (Schmitt 1997). The communicative approach emphasizes the functional use of language and the importance of input on learning the target language. The approach emphasizes that a language can be learned in the case that a learner actively interacts with the teacher or other learners. Interaction and active language learning can cause controlled knowledge to develop into automatic knowledge that frees up time for other mind activities (Macaro, 2001).

According to Schmitt and Schmitt (1993) the recognition of the following matters has resulted in a new emphasis on the learner. First, the amount of time that students can spend in the second language classroom is limited. Usually students have only a few hours a week for learning a second language in the classroom. Second, as students are aware of their own strengths, weaknesses, and styles they can regulate their own learning process. Third, currently, the language teaching field turns its attention towards how successful learners achieve their goals rather than searching for a perfect teaching method. Fourth, cognitive psychology has proved that learners need to actively connect new information to their existing knowledge to learn more effectively. Therefore, learners need to know how to manage their learning process. In other words they need to know how to use language learning strategies.

On the benefits of learning strategies, Oxford (1990) asserts that these strategies cause learners to be actively involved in the learning process, which is essential for communicative competence development. Based on the studies by Rubin (1987) and Stern (1987), which reveal what successful language learners do in learning a language Oxford (1990:8) defines learning strategies as "specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations". She divides strategies into two major classes, namely, direct strategies and indirect strategies, which can be further subdivided into three classes. Oxford's classification scheme is elaborated in more detail in Chapter Two.

Schmitt and Schmitt (1993) argue that although most of the strategies that are listed in Oxford's taxonomy are vocabulary learning strategies, her taxonomy is unsatisfactory in classifying vocabulary learning strategies. Schmitt (1993:27) also asserts that although a large portion of general learning strategy research focuses on vocabulary, vocabulary learning strategies have been "extremely under researched". Only a few vocabulary learning strategies, such as the keyword method and guessing a word's meaning from reading it in context have been the focus of the studies that were intended to find out how language learners learn vocabulary. There have been few studies that have studied "vocabulary learning strategies as a set".

Schmitt (1997) developed a comprehensive inventory of individual vocabulary learning strategies, classifying them into two dimensions. Schmitt's (1997) inventory can be "standardized as a test, can be used to collect the answers from students easily, is based on the theory of learning strategies as well as on theories of memory, is technologically simple, can be used with learners of different educational backgrounds and target languages, is rich and sensitive to the variety of learning strategies, and allows comparison with other studies, among them Schmitt's own survey" (Catalan 2003:60).

The most important advantage of Schmitt's (1997) taxonomy for the purpose of this research is that it is constructed specially for assessing vocabulary learning strategies rather than learning strategies as a broad concept. Also, it is organized based on Oxford's well-known taxonomy of language learning strategies (Segler et al., 2001). Kudo (1999) investigated the vocabulary learning strategies that Japanese learners use to learn English vocabulary. His findings support Oxford's (1990)

classification scheme, which served as a basis for Schmitt's taxonomy. Schmitt's taxonomy was used in this study as the guide in designing the questionnaire and providing input for separate and integrated vocabulary learning strategies instruction.

Before instructing the strategies using Schmitt's (1997) taxonomy it is worth considering whether vocabulary learning strategies as a subclass of language learning strategies are teachable or not. The research on the importance of the strategy training appears to be inconclusive. Oxford (1990) notes that students who have received strategy training learn better. Schmitt and McCarthy (1997:234) cite conflicting findings, such as McDonough (1995) who asserts that "improvements from training are weak, culturally dependent, and appear only in certain measures". He asserts that strategy training may be better for beginner students. On the other hand, they refer to Stoffer's (1995) research who found that strategy training was the best predictor of use of vocabulary learning strategies. Several researchers, such as Marefat (2003), Rusciolelli (2008), Walker (2008) and Sagarra and Alba (2006), prove the effect of instructing guessing and key word technique on learners' success.

According to O'Malley and Chamot (1990) there are two methods for teaching learning strategies, direct and embedded. Direct training is "learning strategy instruction in which students are informed about the value and purpose of learning strategies" (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990: 229). Embedded training is "guidance in the use of learning strategies that is embedded in the task materials but not explicitly defined to the learner as strategy instruction" (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990: 230). Oxford (1996:159) asserts that in the direct method "learners are informed of the value and purpose strategy instruction, are given strategy names, are

prompted to use certain strategies and are told how to evaluate and transfer each strategy". However, as in the embedded method learners are not aware of the various strategies for learning and their value and they are not able to choose or create appropriate strategies for learning a language, transfer those strategies to other tasks or learn a language independently. According to O'Malley and Chamot (1990) and Chamot (2005) several researchers proved that with regard to strategy training, the direct method is more effective than the embedded method. This notion is further elaborated in Chapter Two.

With regard to the effectiveness of the direct method in teaching learning strategies in this study for instructing vocabulary learning strategies the direct method was used. But the issue of concern for this study is whether direct strategy instruction should be integrated into the course or whether it is better to provide a separate course for teaching learning strategies independent of the language course.

Oxford (1996: 241) defines integrated strategy instruction as "the inclusion of strategy instruction exercises woven into the regular classroom curriculum" and Detached (separate) strategy instruction as "the strategy instruction that is conducted with students separate from the classroom activities". O'Malley and Chamot (1990) declare that "an unresolved instruction in learning strategies is whether instruction should focus only on learning strategies instruction or should be integrated with classroom instruction in the language or content subject". Chamot (2004) and O'Malley and Chamot (1990) cited conflicting ideas of scholars who believe that the integrated method causes a transfer of strategies to other tasks and others who think

that learning the strategies during language classes hinders transfer of the strategies. This issue is elaborated further in Chapter Two.

In the fields of second language learning and teaching, gender is a controversial issue and as a variable has received little attention. Compared with the studies that have been done on other variables such as motivation and age the studies that examine gender as a variable are few (Catalan, 2003). Moreover, studies on the effects of gender on language learning strategies use are inconclusive. Although the vast majority of studies such as Sheorey (1999), McMullen (2009) and Kavasoglu (2009) prove that female students use more strategies than males some studies that were conducted by Green and Oxford (1995), Oxford and Ehrman (1995), Hong-Nam and Leavell (2006), Tuncer (2009), Shemais (2003), Aliakbari and Hayatzadeh (2008) reveal that no significant gender differences exists in strategy use.

Research shows that female and male students perform differently in language classes. Chavez (2000) and OK (2003) summarize the outcomes of several studies and concluded that female learners ask more questions, are more polite, shift topics more gradually and unlike male learners prefer emotional topics. Also, male and female students use different strategies for learning a language. This issue is elaborated further in Chapter Two.

In Iran, that is an Islamic country, male and female students go to separate schools. Therefore, it provides a unique condition for researchers who intend to study gender and its effects on learning. The current study was performed on Iranian students. Persian or Farsi serves as the first language of half of the 62 million

inhabitants of Iran and all the subjects of the current study. Persian is widely spoken in Afghanistan, Tajikistan and by relatively smaller groups among the people of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Azerbaijan. The Persian word order is Subject, Object and Verb (SOV) and its nouns have no grammatical gender. The Persian language has many loanwords that mostly come from Arabic and rarely from English, French, German, and the Turkic languages. Students start to learn English and Arabic as foreign languages in grade seven (Mahootian and Gebhardt, 1997).

According to the Islamic Republic of Iran's Ministry of Education and Training web page, the structure of Iran's educational system is divided into pre-school, primary school, middle school and secondary school. Pre-school education is a one-year programme for five year old children. After one year students automatically proceed to the primary school without any assessment. The primary education takes five years and covers grades 1 to 5 for children 6 to 11 years old. Students proceed to the next grades following the final exams. At the end of grade 5, students take a nation-wide exam to proceed to middle school education. Middle school covers grades 6 to 8 for children aged 11 to 13 years old. At the end of this phase students are assessed by taking a regional examination under the supervision of provincial boards of education. Also, considering their abilities and interests students choose their field of study (academic or technical) that they want to pursue in secondary school. The secondary education cycle is a three year cycle during which students are required to complete 96 units in order to be awarded the High School Diploma. Students who intend to enter university must complete one preparation year to be entitled for attending the nationwide university entrance examination known as KONKUR.

1.3 Statement of the problem

As has been noted, O'Malley and Chamot (1990) propose two approaches for teaching learning strategies, direct and embedded. Researchers agree that direct instruction is far more effective than embedded instruction. Consequently, in this study the researcher uses the direct method rather than the embedded method for instructing vocabulary learning strategies. However, as previously mentioned there is little agreement whether strategy instruction should be integrated into the course or whether it is better to provide a separate course for teaching learning strategies independent of the language course. As there are different views regarding the benefits of separate and integrated training of learning strategies, and only a small number of them have attempted to research training students in strategies for particular skill areas (McDonough, 1995), this study attempts to shed some light on the particular area of learning strategies research, namely, vocabulary learning strategies and examines the effect of separate and integrated vocabulary learning strategies instruction on English vocabulary learning by Iranian male and female EFL learners. The concern of the current study is that whether to integrate direct instruction of vocabulary learning strategies into English language regular classes' curriculum or instruct the strategies using the direct method in separate classes from the regular ones.

Considering the big differences that exist between male and female students in the field of second language learning and the lack of comprehensive research on gender as an important variable the researcher has included gender as a variable in this study. The current study is conducted in Iran, which is an Islamic country where

male and female students are instructed in separate schools. As a result, the researcher works in an exceptional condition making the present research unique among the research that has been done in the field of language learning strategies. With regard to the unique situation that exists in Iran's high schools the researcher decided to conduct the research on Iranian high school students. Third grade male and female students, having been exposed to an average of four years of English language study in a same sex classroom, should be a most interesting group to observe for gender differences. The situation is not the same for university students in Iran as male and female students are taught in mixed classes.

A number of researchers such as Rasekh (2003), Arani (2005), Sadeghi and Zarafshan (2006), Naimie and Naimie (2007) and Fazeli (2010) examined the language learning strategies used by Iranian EFL students. These studies investigate the effect of various variables on the use of language learning strategies by Iranian EFL students. Aliakbari and Hayatzadeh (2008) examined the effect of gender on the variation of language learning strategies among Iranian EFL students. Hamzah et al. (2009) narrowed down his study and examined the vocabulary learning strategies used by Iranian EFL students. Thus far, there has been no study done on the effect of vocabulary learning strategies instruction on Iranian male and female EFL students' vocabulary learning. According to Jahangard (2007), vocabulary is not given focus in Iran's high school English textbooks. He also stresses that strategy training is not given attention anywhere in Iran's high school English textbooks.

Given the dearth of research on the effectiveness of integrated and separate methods, the lack of research on instructing vocabulary learning strategies to Iranian English learners, the need to look into learning strategies in Iran's high school English textbooks, the importance of gender in teaching and learning, and the unique situation in Iran, the current research set out to study the effect of separate versus integrated vocabulary learning strategies instruction on Iranian male and female EFL learners vocabulary learning.

1.4. Objectives of the study

The present study aims to examine the effect of separate and integrated vocabulary learning strategies instruction in English vocabulary learning by Iranian male and female EFL learners. On achieving this the study also sets out to explore the vocabulary learning strategies that are currently being used by the students to decide which type of vocabulary learning strategies should be taught. Given the above, the objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To identify the vocabulary learning strategies used by Iranian male and female students to learn English vocabulary.

2. To investigate the differences between the number of vocabulary learning strategies that male and female Iranian students claim to use.

3. To examine the effect of separate vocabulary learning strategies instruction on Iranian male and female students.

4. To investigate the effect of integrated vocabulary learning strategies instruction on Iranian male and female students.

1.5. Research questions

Given the objectives of the study the following questions are asked:

1. Currently, what vocabulary learning strategies do Iranian male and female students use in learning English vocabulary?

2. Do Iranian male and female students differ in the number of vocabulary learning strategies they claim to use?

3. Which method of vocabulary learning strategies instruction, integrated or separate is more effective for learning English vocabulary by Iranian male and female EFL learners?

1.6 Significance of the study

The findings of this study are expected to provide a better understanding of the significance of explicit vocabulary learning strategies training and the effect of separate and integrated vocabulary learning strategies training for Iranian students. The present study also intends to analyze and establish the relationship between the effect of separate and integrated instruction and gender of the students.

First, the study explores the vocabulary learning strategies that Iranian female and male learners use for learning English vocabulary. There are a number of studies that explore language learning strategies that are used by Iranian learners. However, the studies that focus particularly on vocabulary learning strategies are rare.

The learners' pattern of strategy usage may assist teachers to examine how their teaching techniques relate to the vocabulary learning strategies that are used by their students, and may alter their instructional patterns because of such examination. The awareness of learners' pattern of strategy usage may help teachers to choose a textbook that meets their students' needs. It is important also for syllabus designers to design the English textbooks considering the strategies that learners prefer for learning English vocabulary.

Afterwards, the strategies that are used by Iranian learners will be compared to the ones that are used by other learners with different cultural and educational backgrounds. Some researchers conducted studies on language and vocabulary learning strategies of learners with various cultural and educational backgrounds. The existence of similarities or differences among learners with various backgrounds may assists researchers to decide whether to explore the learners' pattern of strategy usage before running a strategy training programme.

The current study also examines similarities and differences among male and female students concerning the use of vocabulary learning strategies. As mentioned, research on the use of language learning strategies by male and female learners is inconclusive. Although some researchers found that female learners use more strategies than male learners, others found no significant gender differences in strategy use. The study may shed light on the male and female learners' pattern of strategy use. Syllabus designers and policy makers

may consider the probable similarities and differences in running English language classes and designing related textbooks.

Additionally, the effectiveness of vocabulary learning strategies treatment considering the learners' gender will be investigated. With the results teachers and syllabus designers may decide whether to include such a treatment in English language classes and textbooks while dealing with male and female learners. As mentioned, the research on the importance of strategy training is inconclusive.

The main part of the current study focuses on investigating the effect of separate versus integrated vocabulary learning strategies instruction on male and female learners' vocabulary learning. It is probable that male and female learners prefer different methods of vocabulary learning strategies instruction. With the results teachers may decide to choose a textbook including some sections for direct training of vocabulary learning strategies or provide some extra sessions to teach vocabulary learning strategies separately considering the learners' gender. It is also important for syllabus designers and policy makers to know whether to include vocabulary learning strategies instruction explicitly in their textbooks or design separate books for teaching vocabulary learning strategies. The results of the study assist syllabus designers and policy makers to choose the most appropriate method considering the learners' gender.

Moreover, as mentioned, the research on the effect of separate and integrated methods of language learning strategy instruction is inconclusive and there is no research which examines the effect of separate and integrated

methods of vocabulary learning strategies instruction considering the gender variable. The findings of the current study may fill the existing gaps in EFL studies regarding vocabulary learning strategies instruction. The study particularly explores vocabulary learning strategies and not language learning strategies as a broad concept.

1.7 Scope and limitations of the study

This study is intended to be exploratory rather than prescriptive. The findings should be interpreted in relation to the following. First, the study investigates the significance of integrated and separate instruction in vocabulary learning strategies on learning English vocabulary by the sample population. Second, gender is included in the study as a variable and the effect of two types of treatment was examined according to the gender of the sample population. Third, to implement the treatment phase and to select the appropriate strategies to focus on, it is essential to understand the vocabulary learning strategies that are currently used by Iranian male and female students.

Consequently a questionnaire was designed according to the Schmitt taxonomy and subjects were asked to express their agreement or disagreement using a six-point Likert scale. As the questionnaire is self-report it is not clear whether the participants actually use the strategies they indicate in learning vocabulary. Their responses may just be their beliefs or thoughts that they have about their use of strategies. Therefore, the word "Claim" is included in the objectives of the study and

the objectives of the study limited to the strategies that male and female students claim to use.

The six-point Likert Scale continuum, never to always, may be fussy because the interpretations of this scale can change according to the context (Hatch and Brown, 1995). For example, participants may think of different contexts when they are asked how frequently they use a bilingual dictionary. They may think of the home context or school context. Their answer may be "it depends". Therefore, it is better to specify the context.

Also, the small sample size of 25 students for each group may not reflect the overall target population. However, the findings obtained from this study can provide useful insights into the use of vocabulary learning strategies in vocabulary learning. Also, regarding the gender of the participants the influence of two types of vocabulary learning instruction, namely, integrated and separate will be clarified.

"Characteristics such as motivation, sex, age, prior education, and cultural background, and learning style may play an important role in the receptiveness of students to learning strategy training and in their ability to acquire new learning strategies" (O'Malley and Chamot 1990:160). In the present study the effect of gender was controlled with male and female subjects receiving instruction in separate classes and their performance being examined separately. The participants are all Iranian third grade high school students, aged from 17 to 18 years old and have not received any specific training on vocabulary learning strategies prior to the study. However, their various learning styles may affect the way they learn vocabulary

learning strategies and the way they apply the strategies for learning new vocabulary. It was impossible for the researcher to divide participants according to their learning styles as the students are allocated in high school classes randomly by school authorities.

1.8 Definition of key terms

Language learning strategies: Oxford (1990:8) defines language learning strategies as "specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations". Oxford (1999:7) declares that the word strategy comes from the ancient Greek term *strategia*, which means "the art of war". In non-military settings the word strategy means "a plan, step, or conscious action toward achievement of an objective" (Oxford, 1990:8).

Separate strategy instruction: As the name suggests separate strategy instruction is "the strategy instruction that is conducted with students separate from the classroom activities" Oxford (1996:241). Holec et al. (1997:98) used the term Independent for this strategy and define it as the training that can be "given before language training or in parallel with it". According to Grenfell and Harris (1999), such instruction might be labelled as study skills.

Integrated strategy instruction: Oxford (1996: 241) defines integrated strategy instruction as "the inclusion of strategy instruction exercises woven into the regular classroom curriculum" (Oxford, 1996: 241). According to Holec et al. (1997) in the

integrated method as opposed to the independent (separate) method the learners learn the strategies during language learning.

Determination strategies: These strategies are used for "discovering a new word's meaning without recourse to another person's expertise" Schmitt (1997:205). The strategies such as analysing part of speech, analysing affixes and roots, check for cognates, guess from context, using monolingual or bilingual dictionaries and using word lists for discovering the meaning of new words are categorized as determination strategies in Schmitt's (1997) taxonomy.

Social strategies: Schmitt (1997:205) asserts that strategies that are used to understand a word "by asking someone who knows it" are social strategies. For example, strategies such as asking teacher for a paraphrase and asking classmates for the meaning of new words are social strategies.

Memory strategies: The "approaches which relate new materials to existing knowledge" (Schmitt, 1997:205) are memory strategies. Schmitt (1997) considers the strategies that involve association, linking new information to prior knowledge and using imagery as memory strategies.

Cognitive strategies: strategies that involve "manipulation or transformation of the target language by the learner" are defined by Schmitt (1997:205) as cognitive strategies. He categorizes the strategies that include written and verbal repetition and using mechanical means to study vocabulary are categorized as cognitive vocabulary learning strategies by Schmitt (1997).

Metacognitive strategies: Schmitt (1997:205) defines the strategies that involve "a conscious overview of the learning process and making decisions about planning, monitoring, or evaluating the best ways to study" as metacognitive strategies. He categorizes the strategies such as testing oneself with word lists and using spaced word practice that assist the learner to choose the most effective learning strategies as metacognitive strategies. According to him these strategies also provide reinforcement if progress is being made or a signal to switch the strategies if it is not.

1.9 Summary

This chapter presents the purpose of the study and explains the background to reveal the significance of the phenomenon at hand, namely, language learning strategies and strategy instruction. This is followed by the research questions that the study had set out to answer. Finally, the key terms are defined. The related literature on language learning strategies is elaborated in the following chapter.

Chapter 2

Review of related literature

2.1 Introduction

As Nation (1982:20) suggests, "at the rate which new vocabulary is introduced into most published courses, it takes several years before learners are capable of reading simplified books at the two thousand word level". Therefore, researchers investigated several techniques like the use of a synonym, pictures, mnemonic techniques and saying or writing the foreign word for improving the learners' vocabulary repertoire. These techniques are categorized as learning strategies by scholars. This chapter provides a review of the related literature on language learning strategies and the variables that are related.

2.2 Breadth of Vocabulary Knowledge

Learners' vocabulary size or breadth of knowledge is defined by Nation (2001) as the number of words language learners basically recognize at a particular level of language proficiency. But how much vocabulary does a second language learner need? To answer this question it is necessary to distinguish low and high frequency words in terms of their usage.

High-frequency words cover a very large proportion of the words that are used in spoken and written texts. "Usually the two thousand word level is set as a suitable limit for high frequency words" (Nation 2001:14). Most of these words are

function words such as a, some, two, because, and to. Some of them are content words, that is, nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs (Nation 2001).

On the other hand, low frequency words are the ones that occur very infrequently and are rarely used by the language users. Some low frequency words are words with moderate frequency that could not get into the high frequency list and many other low frequency words are proper names like Carl and Johnson. However, it is important to consider that peoples' vocabulary grows partly as a result of their jobs, interests and specializations and "one person's technical vocabulary is another person's low frequency word" (Nation, 2001:20).

The important question is how many low frequency and high frequency words need to be known by learners? Nation and Waring (1997) suggest that to read a text fluently the 5,000 most frequent words must be mastered by learners. The American Heritage Word Frequency Book (Carroll, Davies and Richman, 1971 in: Nation 2001) states that in English school textbooks there are 88,533 distinct word families. Schmitt (2008) in a study found that learners need to know 8,000-9,000 word families for reading and 5,000-7,000 word families for oral discourse. Nation (2008) concludes that to read a text users need a vocabulary of 15,000 to 20,000 words.

In addition to the number of low frequency and high frequency words that need to be known by language users, the percentage of lexical items in written or spoken discourse that a learner must know in order to understand it, has also been investigated by many researchers in recent years. Hu and Nation (2000 in: Schmitt,

2008) found that for understanding the meaning of the written or spoken discourse, 98% of the words must be known. Therefore learners need to learn a large amount of vocabulary to achieve proficiency in English.

As Schmitt (2008:332) points out, considering the "scope of the vocabulary learning task, and the fact that many learners fail to achieve even moderate vocabulary learning goals", it cannot be assumed that one can master an adequate vocabulary simply from exposure to language tasks or focusing on other linguistic aspects. Rather, a more "proactive, principled approach" is needed for vocabulary learning.

According to him students need to be active learners to achieve the required vocabulary. Also, they need guidance about which lexical items to learn, and help in developing effective learning techniques. Teachers provide the required guidance to help the students to learn the vocabulary but they may not have adequate experience and knowledge to provide the guidance without help. Therefore, researchers help teachers by providing reliable information about vocabulary and effective methods of learning it. Material writers have a significant role in delivering this research based knowledge to teachers and learners.

2.3 Depth of vocabulary knowledge

In addition to the learners' vocabulary size or breadth of knowledge, their depth of knowledge is also important. Read (1993:357) asserts that depth of knowledge refers to the "quality of lexical knowledge, or how well the learner knows

a word". Laufer (2005:11) asserts that knowing a word means mastering "its spoken and written form, morphology, grammatical features, various referential and affective meanings, paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations with other words, and constraints on its use". Therefore, in addition to providing the link between form and meaning, teachers and researchers need to find a way to deepen the learners' word knowledge.

Laufer (2005) also indicates that in the first language, repeated exposure to the word causes learning different aspects of word knowledge and develops the depth of knowledge. However, in the second language one may not have the opportunity for encountering the word in different contexts. For development of depth of knowledge second language learners require rich instruction. Rich instruction "involves giving elaborate attention to a word, going beyond the immediate demands of a particular context of occurrence…it involves spending time on the word, explicitly exploring several aspects of what is involved in knowing a word and involving the learners in thoughtfully and actively processing the word" (Nation 2001: 95).

Nation (2001) lists a range of activities that are appropriate for providing the required rich instruction for vocabulary learning. For example, he suggests that activities such as pronouncing the word and reading the word aloud are appropriate for learning the spoken form of the word. These activities are defined by Oxford (1990) as learning strategies. According to her, strategies are "specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective and more transferable to new situations" (Oxford, 1990:8).