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TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVE IN DEVELOPING EFL LEARNERS' VOCABULARY

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Abstract

The study tries to focus on teachers' perspective in developing EFL learners' vocabulary and the suitable techniques teachers should use in teaching English vocabulary. One of the main objectives of this study is to suggest suitable techniques in teaching English vocabulary and encourage English teachers to use modern and different techniques to motivate their students and develop their English language. A questionnaire is used for the data collection of this study. The samples of the study were taken exclusively from the English teachers of Onaiza Colleges- Gassim- KSA. The questionnaire is distributed to (30) teachers. The data obtained from the instrument has been analyzed, figured and finally interpreted according to the research style. The study results revealed that employing different techniques in teaching vocabulary motivate students and develop their language. Moreover, students' textbook is not enough for developing their vocabulary. Also explaining vocabulary items in a meaningful context is one of the successful tools for developing vocabulary. As well as Using visual aids motivate students and develop their vocabulary. The researcher recommends that teachers should adopt and use modern teaching techniques in teaching the new vocabulary and using the new technology has a great role in developing English vocabulary, so teachers have to use it inside their classroom, such “ internet-

based activities and other activities related to the new technology in order to help students improve their English vocabulary. Moreover teachers should always explain the new vocabulary in a meaningful context.

Key words: Teaching vocabulary- (EFL) English as a Foreign Language- Developing English Vocabulary- Vocabulary Acquisition- Visual Aids.

Introduction

English has four aspects and skills that must be known by the learners. The four aspects are spelling, pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar. Meanwhile, the four skills namely are listening, reading, writing and speaking. Those four aspects can develop the four skills in English.

One of the factors affecting, students in learning English vocabulary is the components of language. This involves vocabulary and structure, vocabulary and sound system, and vocabulary and spelling. In addition to those factors, the teachers' ability in applying a number of techniques can also influence the students' vocabulary development.

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To understand the language, learners have to invent the meaning of words as many as possible either in a sentence or in whole texts. The writer assumes that language is a systematic communication tool that may transfer ones' ideas or feeling through body language, signs, sounds and gesture having understood meanings. On the other hands, by using language, one can express his ideas, feeling or information either orally or written.

As one of the essential elements of the language system, vocabulary serves as the very basis of language development. Vocabulary is known as the building blocks of language and no language acquisition can take place without the acquisition of vocabulary. Foreign language acquisition is generally deemed to be closely associated with vocabulary study and many scholars prove that lexical deficiency constantly interferes with the daily communication. Simultaneously, many second language learners generally believe that it is vocabulary, rather than grammar that obstructs them from reading, listening, speaking, writing as well as exchanging information with others in a foreign language. They hold that vocabulary carries the basic information they need to understand and express information.

The definition of language refers to the expression of certain meanings; of course teachers may not neglect the role of vocabulary chosen. It plays an important role as means of understanding the meaning of words correctly. Wallace (1982:9) argues that "*there is a sense in which learning a foreign language is basically a matter of*

learning vocabulary in target language". Hence, vocabulary is the basic aspect of language in teaching and learning process. It means that it is an important part of the language components like grammar, pronunciation, spelling, etc.

As noted above, it can be inferred that students' comprehension on the meaning of words is largely influential on their ability to translate and construct a sentence, even, if the meaning of word is related to reading comprehension. Robert et al, (1995:367) states that vocabulary is: "*requisite for reading comprehension, in which people who do not know the meaning of words are most probably poor readers*".

Many teachers tend to focus mostly on grammatical rules. They merely teach reading comprehension without giving clear explanation about the techniques or methods on how to recognize the meaning of words rather than on vocabulary. Also teaching of English vocabulary may often be neglected in the teaching-learning process. For this reason Lawson (1996:37) says that vocabulary is considered as neglected aspect of language learning that has not significantly changed today.

Allen (1993:3) reveals that many "*teachers assume that vocabulary can be developed in teaching learning process*". However, the students in reality encounter the problems to find out the meaning of words. If the problems still exist, he adds that there are two factors that will affect the failure of the students in understanding the meaning of words. Those are (1) they do not have any skill in comprehending the

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meaning of words, and (2) they do not have enough the basic competency to translate both a word and a sentence in a text.

In every real sense, the students cannot master the meaning of words in a sentence and neither can communicate in English appropriately because teaching and learning activities as mentioned above still focus on the grammatical rules rather than on vocabulary in context. Consequently, they only have competence in structure, but they cannot communicate accurately.

The Importance of Vocabulary Development

According to Steven Stahl (2005), *“Vocabulary knowledge is knowledge; the knowledge of a word not only implies a definition, but also implies how that word fits into the world.”* learners continue to develop vocabulary throughout their life. Words are powerful. Words open up possibilities, and of course, that’s what teachers want for all of their students.

Vocabulary helps students express themselves more precisely and sharpens communication skills. It also requires students to cognitive academic language proficiency. When students learn more and different vocabulary words, which help them to understand what other people are saying, at the same time develop their confidence of expressing themselves clearly. Also comprehension improves when the learner knows what the words mean. Since comprehension is the ultimate goal of reading, you cannot overestimate the importance of vocabulary development. Words are the currency of communication. It is clear that knowledge of different types

of vocabulary improves all areas of communication and the four language skills listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Today's students are exposed to vocabulary in a greater variety of ways than at any other time in history. Considering the fact that they have access to abundant reading materials, television, movies, newspapers, magazines, and companions, it would seem that students’ vocabulary would be richer than any preceding generation, and this will depend on the wise use of the mentioned tools.

Differences in Early Vocabulary Development

People know that young children acquire vocabulary indirectly, first by listening when others speak or read to them, and then by using words to talk to others. As children begin to read and write, they acquire more words through understanding what they are reading and then incorporate those words into their speaking and writing. Vocabulary knowledge varies greatly among learners. The word knowledge gap between groups of children begins before they enter school, and the question is that, Why do some students have a richer, fuller vocabulary than some of their classmates? Steven Stahl (2005) points to different reasons as follows:

- *Language rich home with lots of verbal stimulation.*
- *Wide background experiences.*
- *Read to at home and at school.*
- *Read a lot independently.*

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- *Early development of word consciousness.*

At the same time he raised another question that, Why do some students have a limited, inadequate vocabulary compared to most of their classmates? Also he points to some reasons as follows.

- *Speaking/vocabulary not encouraged at home.*
- *Limited experiences outside of home.*
- *Limited exposure to books.*
- *Reluctant reader.*
- *Second language—English language learners.*

Hart and Risley, (1995) argues that “Children who have been encouraged by their parents to ask questions and to learn about things and ideas come to school with oral vocabularies many times larger than children from disadvantaged homes. Without intervention this gap grows ever larger as students proceed through school”.

Vocabulary teaching and learning

Vocabulary teaching and learning is a constant challenge for teachers as well as students because historically there has been minimal focus on vocabulary instruction in the EFL classroom. Due to this, an increased emphasis on vocabulary development is crucial for the English language learner in the process of language learning. In this point, Adger, (2002) states that the average native English speaker enters nursery school knowing at least 5,000 words while the

average English language learner may know 5,000 words in his/ her native language but only a few words in English. The reality is that native speakers continue to learn new words while English language learners face the double challenge of building that foundation and closing that language gap.

The knowledge of vocabulary also differs from person to another according to the type of vocabulary. Zwiers,(2008) says that Technical vocabulary is words or phrases that are primarily used in a specific line of work or profession. For example, an electrician needs to know technical words such as capacitor and surge capacity, words that people outside that industry never use. Academic vocabulary on the other hand is the vocabulary critical to understanding the concepts of the content taught in schools.

Also English for Academic Purposes classroom focuses mostly on academic language. Academic language is the language used by teachers and students for the purpose of acquiring new knowledge. Herrel, (2004) defines academic English as the English needed for reading, writing, speaking and listening in the content areas. Hence, if students in the English for Academic Purposes classroom need a language proficiency that will enable them to comprehend academic content and participate in activities and assignments, then it is even more important for the teacher to employ effective and dynamic teaching strategies that will empower the students to master the required tasks.

Since the focus of this study is on effective vocabulary teaching strategies employed by teachers in the English for

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Academic Purposes classroom, it is crucial to highlight the importance of academic vocabulary instruction in the English for academic Purposes ESL classroom. Taylor, (1990) found that vocabulary instruction directly improves comprehension. He points out that, as the difficulty of words in a text increases, understanding of the text decreases; therefore it is critical for students to have a deep understanding of academic vocabulary in order to understand new concepts. He also states that we use academic vocabulary to communicate to the world.

Zwiers, (2008) also argues that academic vocabulary enables us to communicate our needs, increases our chances that our needs are fulfilled and enables us to understand the needs of others. Furthermore, vocabulary is positively related to higher-status occupations. It is clear that vocabulary acquisition is essential to academic, social and professional success. Once again the teacher's role in ensuring this success is critical.

Vocabulary Acquisition

Language acquisition is a process when the learner picks up any component of a language in a natural setting. Second language acquisition occurs after the learners have acquired their mother tongue. Language acquisition or language learning differs among individuals and there are many predictors that determine the second language learning success. Many people believe that young learners acquire a second language more successfully than adult learners. Adult learners are better in learning grammar (syntax and morphology) because

they analyze the structure and are likely to make fewer mistakes than young learners. Young learners, on the other hand, are better in pronunciation and in learning words more quickly but they are not able to analyze grammar structures.

Brown (1987) suggests that "SLA involves cognitive processes that consist of many types of learning, and every individual utilizes a variety of strategies and styles in order to master the language". Also Brikena, X. (2008) says that when we deal with native speakers of English, vocabulary acquisition grows rapidly in childhood; however vocabulary knowledge continues to develop in adult life through experiences, concepts and opportunities for learning. The second language learner on the other hand, sees vocabulary acquisition as a matter of learning vocabulary. Therefore, they spend a considerable amount of time in learning words by memorizing word lists of L2 words or simply by checking the dictionary. At the same point Brikena, X. (2008) states that:

“Vocabulary acquisition is incremental in nature and this means that words are not learned instantaneously but they are learned over a period of time. The number of words learned depends on numerous exposures to a particular word. Another way of helping students acquire vocabulary is through direct study. Direct study is the more efficient, particularly for high-risk students with poor vocabularies”.

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It is widely believed that reading is the major source of vocabulary growth in L1. Students with strong reading skills who read a variety of texts may realize substantial gains in their vocabulary without direct instruction. Brikena, X. (2008) says that students may also realize some incidental vocabulary gains through independent reading, however. Teachers should neither ignore nor rely solely upon incidental acquisition but rather seek to enhance its effectiveness with vocabulary logs, word walls and other techniques.

Importance of the study

Vocabulary is considered as one of the most important skills necessary for learning a foreign language. It is the basis for the development of all the other skills, reading, writing, listening, speaking, spelling and pronunciation. Vocabulary is the essential tool for the students in their attempts to use English effectively and accurately. Many teachers neglect teaching vocabulary and do not focus on using the suitable techniques in teaching English vocabulary, so the researcher tries to

investigate the effective vocabulary teaching techniques in order to develop EFL learners vocabulary.

Objectives of the study

The study aims to:

- 1. Suggest suitable techniques in teaching English vocabulary.
- 2. Encourage English teachers to use modern and different techniques to motivate their students and develop their English language.

Hypotheses of the study

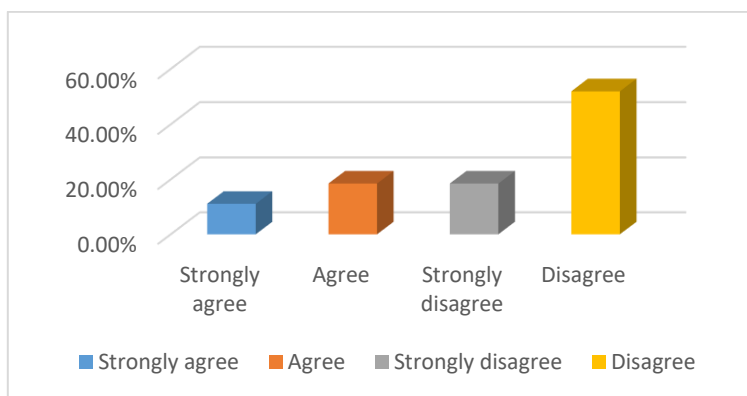
- 1. Teachers Employ different techniques in teaching vocabulary inside the classroom.

Questions of the study

- 1. What are the suitable techniques that teachers can use in teaching vocabulary?

Results of the study

The hypothesis: “Teachers Employ different techniques in teaching vocabulary inside the classroom”.



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Figure (1) Depending only on the textbook for developing students’ vocabulary.

Based on the statement “Depending only on the textbook is enough for developing students’ vocabulary”. The results of the study revealed that (51.9%) of the participants disagreed, (18.5%) strongly disagreed and (18.5%) agreed, while only (11.1%) strongly. It is clear from the results above that depending only on the textbook is

not enough for developing and improving students’ vocabulary. Developing students’ vocabulary requires additional materials beside the textbook to enrich students’ vocabulary as well as motivating them to acquire new words and information. From the negative responses, it is clear that the hypothesis is not achieved successfully.

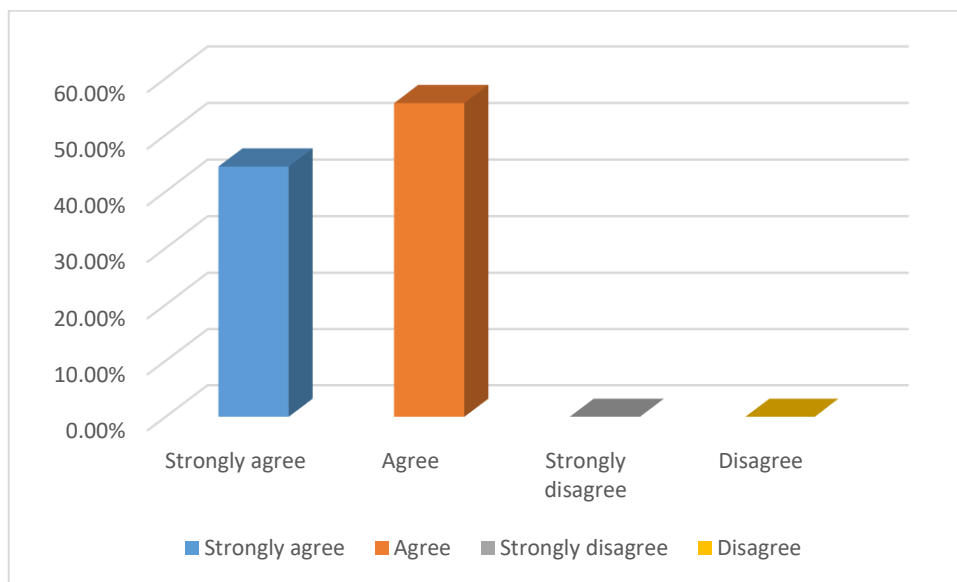


Figure (2) Employing different techniques inside the classroom

Based on the statement “Employing different techniques inside the classroom develop students’ vocabulary” the results of the study as shown on the figure (2) revealed that most of the participants in a percentage of (55.6%) agreed on the statement, and (44.4%) strongly agreed. The positive responses reveal that employing different teaching techniques

inside the classroom had a great role developing students’vocabulary as well as improving students’ performance in learning English language and increase their motivation. The positive responses also reflect that the statement is achieved successfully.

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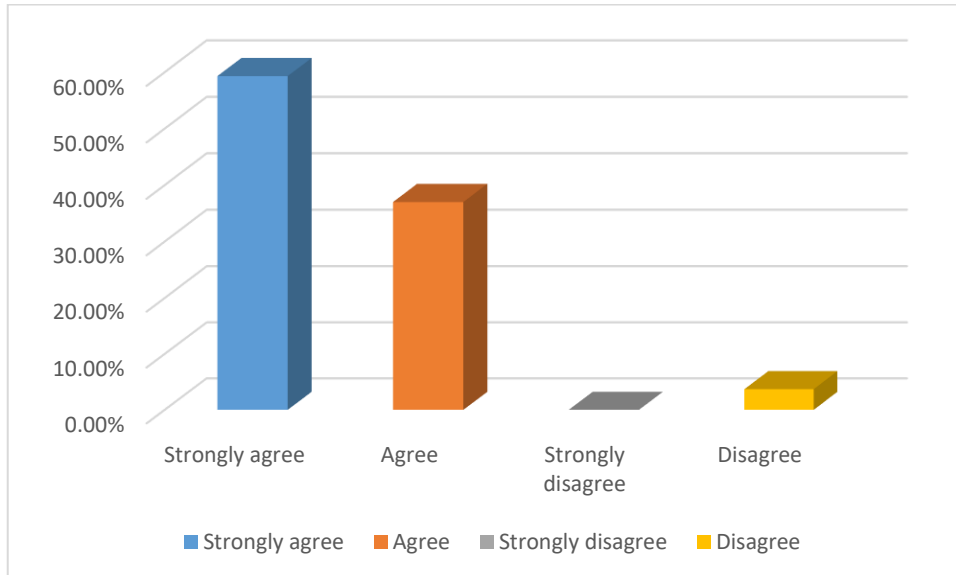
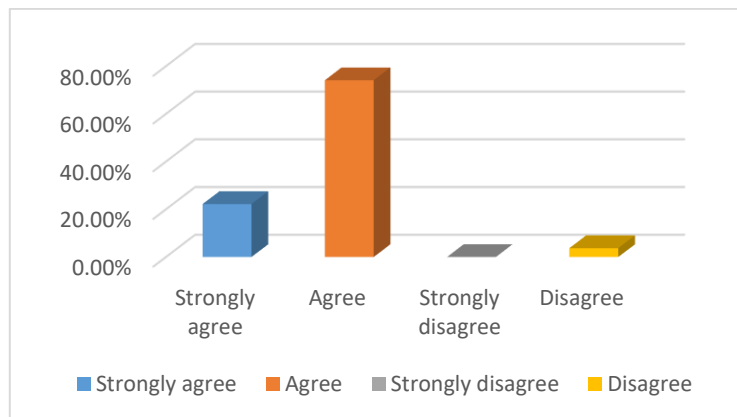


Figure (3) Using additional materials beside the textbook.

Based on the statement “using additional materials beside the textbook improve students’ vocabulary.” The results of the study revealed that most of the participants in a percentage of (59.3%) strongly agreed on the statement and (37%) of them agreed, while only (3.7%) disagreed that using additional materials beside the textbook improve students’

vocabulary. The positive responses revealed that the study hypothesis is achieved successfully. Using the textbook only is not enough to develop students’ vocabulary, as well as using additional and different material reinforce students’ motivation for acquiring new vocabulary and develop their language.



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Figure (4) Using internet-based activities for teaching vocabulary.

Based on the statement “Internet-based activities are good methods of teaching vocabulary”. And as shown on the figure above, the results of the study revealed that most of the questionnaire participants in a percentage of (74.1%) agreed on the statement and (22.2%) strongly agreed, while only (3.7%) disagreed that internet-based activities are

good methods of teaching vocabulary. It is clear from the positive responses that using internet-based activities are important in developing students’ vocabulary, at the same time using different teaching activities and techniques motivate students and improve their language. The study hypothesis is achieved successfully.

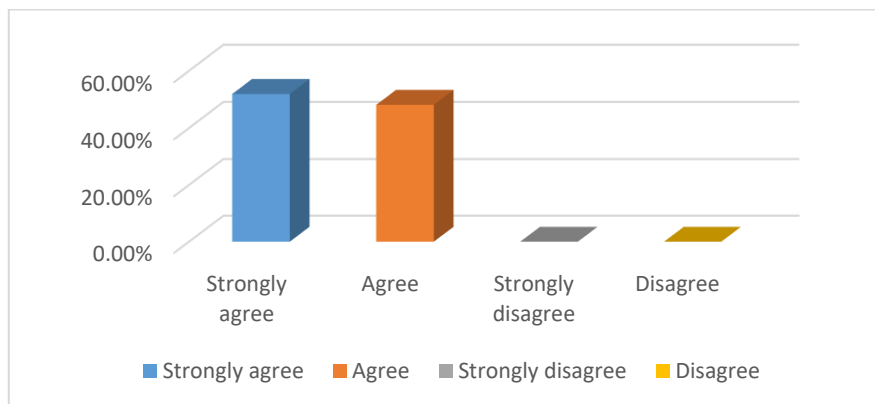


Figure (5) Using visual aids for teaching new vocabulary

Based on the statement “Using the visual aids demonstrate the meaning of the new vocabulary”. The results of the study revealed that most of the questionnaire participants in a percentage of (51.9%) strongly agreed on the statement, while the rest of the participants in a percentage of (48.1%) also agreed on the statement. It’s clear from the positive responses of the

participants that using visual aids in teaching vocabulary is important and teachers should use different types of the effective visual aids in order to improve their students’ vocabulary, as well to motivate them. Also it’s clear from the positive responses that the study hypothesis is successfully achieved.

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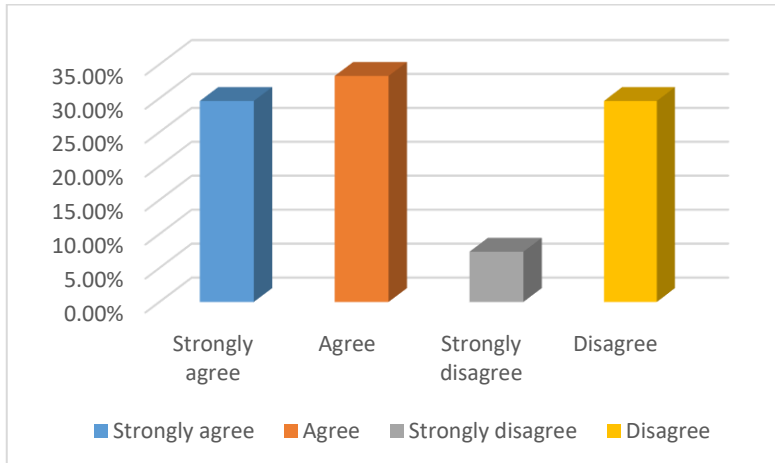


Figure (6) explaining vocabulary items in a meaningful context.

Based on the statement “Teachers always explain vocabulary items in a meaningful context”. The results of the study revealed that (33.3%) of the participants agreed on the statement, (29.6%) strongly agreed, while (29.6%) disagreed and only (7.4%) of the participants strongly disagreed teachers always explain vocabulary items in a

meaningful context. the responses reflect the importance of teaching vocabulary in a context and teachers need to follow the technique in order to develop the learners’ vocabulary. Also teachers should try as possible to use different teaching methods to develop their students’ performance and vocabulary.

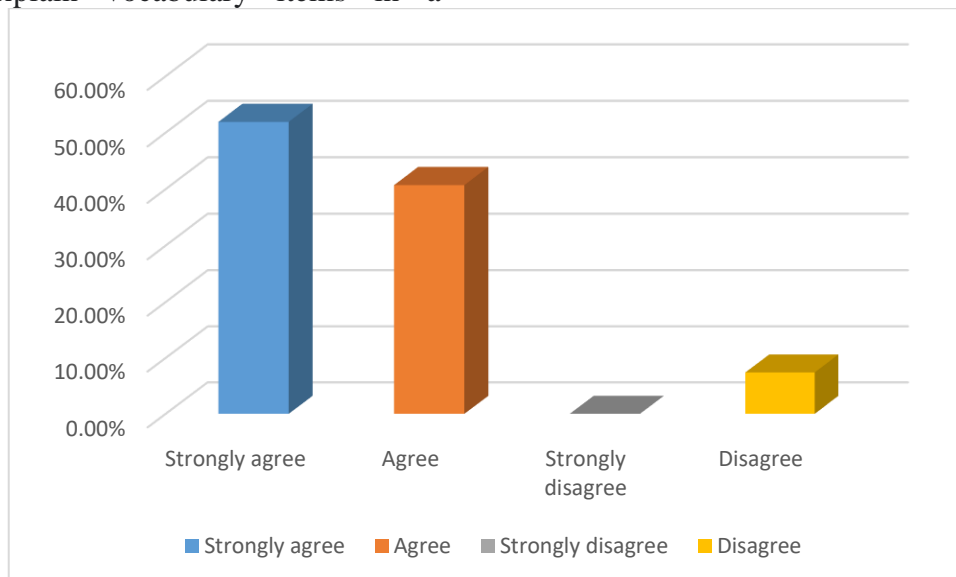


Figure (7) explaining the new vocabulary while teaching.

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Based on the questionnaire statement “When teaching reading comprehension, teachers have to explain the new vocabulary”. The results of the study as shown on the above figure revealed that (51.9%) of the participants strongly agreed on the statement and (40.7%) agreed, while only (7.4%) of the participants disagreed. It is clear from the

positive responses above that explaining the new vocabulary while teaching reading comprehension is very important and teacher have to explain the new vocabulary regularly in order to develop their students’ performance in English language. The positive results also revealed that the study hypothesis is successfully achieved.

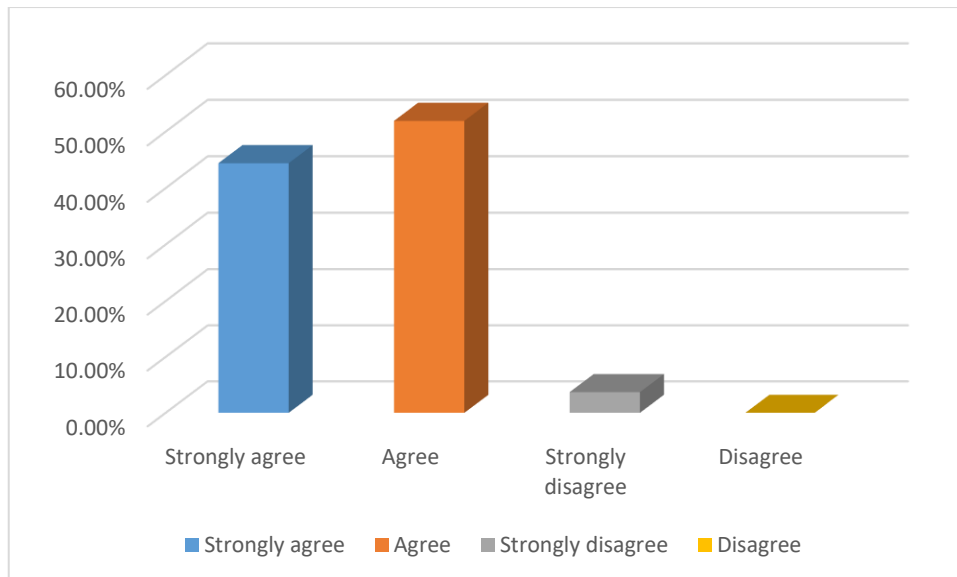


Figure (8) Teaching the new vocabulary in acontext.

Based on the questionnaire statement “Teaching the new vocabulary in context is good for developing students’ English language”. The results of the study as clear on the above figure revealed that most of the participants, in a percentage of (51.9%) agreed and (44.4%) strongly agreed on the statement, while only (3.7%) strongly disagreed on the statement. It is

clear from the positive responses that teaching new vocabulary in a context is one of the most important techniques in teaching English vocabulary and teachers should concentrate on it so as to develop their students’ vocabulary. Also, the positive responses reveal that the study hypothesis is achieved successfully.

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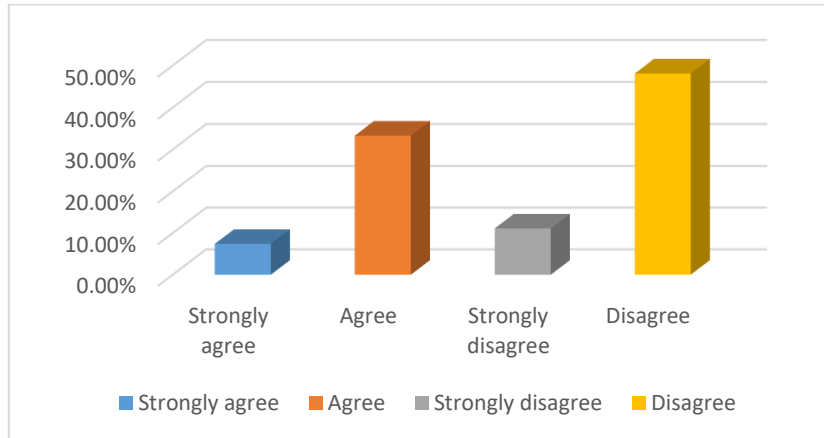
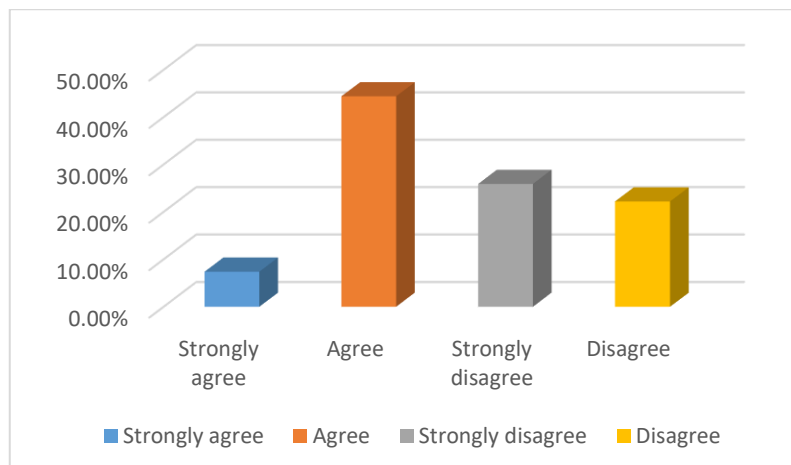


Figure (9) teaching words in a separate way.

Based on the statement “The traditional method of teaching words in a separate way is good for developing students’ vocabulary”. The results of the revealed that (48.1%) of the study participants disagreed, (33.3%) agreed and (11.1%) strongly disagreed, while only (7.4%) strongly disagreed that the traditional method of teaching words in a separate way is good for developing students’ vocabulary. Also the most of the

students’ responses were negative and this revealed that teaching vocabulary in a separate way doesn’t help students to acquire new words in an effective and successful way. So teachers need to change this technique and use modern ones in order to develop and improve their students’ vocabulary as well their learning in general. From the negative responses, it is clear that study hypothesis is not achieved successfully.



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Figure (10) Vocabulary is neglected aspect of language learning.

Based on the statement “Vocabulary is considered as neglected aspect of language learning.” the results of this statement revealed that most of the participants in a percentage of (44.4%) agreed on the statement, (25.9%) strongly disagreed and (22.2%) disagreed, while only (7.4%) strongly agreed on the statement. the statement also attempts to reveal for what extent teachers focus and care of teaching English vocabulary. The participants’ responses revealed that teachers need to concentrate on teaching vocabulary and use the modern teaching techniques so as to develop their students’ language performance.

Findings of the study

After discussing and analyzing the study results the researcher has listed the following findings:

1. Employing different techniques in teaching vocabulary motivate students and develop their language.
2. Students’ textbook is not enough for developing their vocabulary.
3. Explaining vocabulary items in a meaningful context is one of the successful tools for developing vocabulary.
4. Using visual aids motivate students and develop their vocabulary.
5. Teachers need to focus on vocabulary as a priority in English language learning and teaching.

Recommendations

The researcher recommends the following:

1. Teachers should adopt and use modern teaching techniques in teaching the new vocabulary.
2. Teachers should use additional materials beside the textbook in order to motivate their students, as well as to develop their vocabulary.
3. Using the new technology has a great role in developing English vocabulary, so teachers have to use it inside their classroom, such “ internet-based activities and other activities related to the new technology in order to help students improve their English vocabulary.
4. Teachers should always explain the new vocabulary in a meaningful context.
5. When teaching reading comprehension teachers shouldn’t neglect explaining the new vocabulary.

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