Formal Vocabulary Instruction in EFL Context

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Abstract
This paper discusses various methods of formal vocabulary instruction in Taiwan’s EFL context. It will begin by examining vocabulary learning difficulties that Taiwanese students may experience in terms of English letter-sound relationships, written and spoken forms, word meaning, and usage, each followed by direct vocabulary teaching strategies for minimizing the learning burden. Next, the paper will explore teaching strategies that can be used to guide students towards successful vocabulary learning in the classroom. The paper will conclude with a brief review of vocabulary learning strategies that students can use to improve vocabulary learning, including using word cards, the Keyword Method, learning word parts, and bilingual dictionary use.

Key words: vocabulary instruction, written and spoken forms, learning burden, vocabulary learning strategies, the Keyword Method, bilingual dictionary

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I. Introduction

We, English teachers, often hear students say, “I can’t remember the vocabulary I’ve learned,” “I don’t know how to put the vocabulary word in sentences,” or “I don’t have enough vocabulary to read or write.” These problems demonstrate that vocabulary learning has never been an easy task for many EFL students in Taiwan. In fact, vocabulary learning and development can be one of the most burdensome and frustrating experiences when students are learning English. According to the suggested word list from the College Entrance Examination Center, normal college-bound students have to acquire approximately 6,500 vocabulary words, as well as many phrases and idioms before they can successfully study at the college level. Given the large number of vocabulary words students need to learn, vocabulary instruction, as Stoller and Grabe (1993) have suggested, should hold an important place in English language teaching and learning. Unfortunately, not much time and attention has been paid to vocabulary instruction in the traditional learning setting, where class size is usually large and class hours are limited. Oftentimes vocabulary instruction accounts for only a small percentage of overall class hours and is usually viewed as a subcomponent of other activities, such as reading and listening comprehension practice. As a consequence, students are left to study newly learned vocabulary words independently outside the classroom, and many feel overwhelmed trying to memorize so many words that they quickly give up.

Vocabulary learning has never been fun or easy. The development of vocabulary requires a whole range of studies, such as a “combination of direct vocabulary instruction, vocabulary-learning strategies, extensive reading and word learning from context, heightened student awareness of new words, and motivation to use and collect words” (Grabe, 2009, p. 283). Also, learning a vocabulary word is more than just being able to figure out its definition. Learning a vocabulary word involves mastering its spoken and written form, grammatical patterns and collocations, function, and meaning. Additionally, learning a vocabulary word includes the use of its lexicon (Nation, 1990; Pavicic, 2008; Thornbury, 2002).

Obviously, the acquisition of new vocabulary requires teachers and students to share the responsibility for successful learning. While some might argue that students should take more responsibility for their own learning, putting students in charge in the learning process seldom produce the desired results. In other words, to make vocabulary learning more effective and enjoyable, teachers must play a vital role in the process along with students (Nation, 2008). Teachers are responsible for making vocabulary learning interesting and rewarding in the classroom. Furthermore, they need to have considerable knowledge of what makes learning vocabulary words challenging, or as Nation (1990) has defined it, the “learning burden” of words (p. 33). They also need to understand students’ previous language experience and their mother tongue (Nation, 1990). What is more, it is the teacher’s responsibility to provide students with ample opportunities for practice inside the classroom, as well as to develop awareness of vocabulary learning strategies that help students build vocabulary knowledge outside the classroom.

This paper will start by exploring the possible sources of difficulties in vocabulary learning faced by Taiwanese students. By understanding the potential obstacles in vocabulary learning, teachers can provide targeted instruction in the classroom so that the time invested will be duly rewarded. Listed below are the features of English words teachers can
spend time on in the classroom, each followed by corresponding techniques.

Hidden Obstacles

i. Letter-Sound Relationships

The majority of English words (about 70 to 85 percent) follow regular phonetic patterns (Manzo & Manzo, 1994). Thus, to teach literacy, many native speakers of English teach their children to read with phonics – a method for teaching word recognition based on letter-sound relationships. By learning phonemes along with memorizing common spelling patterns, children are able to pronounce many words correctly even though they may not understand their meanings. If children are familiar with phonics principles, they are assumed to be able to spell the word more readily and naturally (Spear-Swerling, 2005).

However, phonics alone is not sufficient. The relationship of sound to spelling in English is not an exact one-to-one relationship. In other words, English spelling, classified as “deep orthography” or “opaque orthography” is more irregular and complicated when compared to other Indo-European languages (Grabe, 2009, p.114). Take for example English vowel sounds. The spelling patterns for English vowel sounds can be challenging for many students because the same sound can be spelled in several different ways. The long vowel sound of \( a \) can be seen in several different spelling patterns such as open syllables (a syllable ending in a vowel), vowel-consonant-e, ai, ay, and ei. In like manner, the spelling patterns for English consonants are not easier than those of vowel sounds. The pronunciation of /k/ sound, for example, can be spelled in several different spelling patterns, such as c, k, ck, ch, and cc. While many words follow regular phonetic patterns, there are also many words that do not follow the rules. For example, the long vowel sound of \( e \) is usually represented by spelling patterns such as ee, ea, ei, or ie. However, words such as steak, matinee, or fiancée do not follow the rules.

Obviously, learning phonics is no panacea; there is no guarantee that students will be able to spell any word correctly if they are taught the spelling rules. However, by drawing students’ attention to the spelling patterns before they plunge into memorizing words by themselves, teachers can help lighten the learning burden of spelling. In this way, students may have less trouble remembering the letters representing the sounds they are learning.

Yet current evidence supporting phonics is still insufficient to replace the currently used K.K. Phonetic technique which is found in A Pronouncing Dictionary of American English by Kenyon and Knott (1953) and commonly taught in formal learning settings in Taiwan. However, I believe efforts would be rewarded if teachers could spend some time on the letter-sound relationships and common spelling patterns every time a new vocabulary word is introduced. Of course, a different technique is needed if the parts that are difficult to remember are the irregular words.

ii. Written and Spoken Forms

Aside from the unpredictable letter-sound relationships, English uses the Roman script, which is completely different from Chinese. English and Chinese do not have any common origin or etymology as opposed to some Indo-European languages that feature many cognates (e.g., English and Spanish, or English and French). For this reason, English words may look weird and sound bizarre for students. Imagine students’ response when asked to remember and read out loud words such as illiterate or obliterate. Why are these words spelled the way they are and why do they sound the
way they do? For many students, these words are tedious. Students may repeat the words and still not be able to remember their spoken and written forms.

To make word forms more meaningful and easier to remember, a number of researchers suggest teaching Greek and Latin affixes and roots in the classroom (Graves, 1987; Graves, Rudo, Sales & Baumann, 2012; Marzano, 2010; Nation, 1990). Nation (1990) observes that because two-thirds of low-frequency English vocabulary comes from French, Latin, or Greek and a lot of English words are derived from other English words, knowing the meanings of some common Greek and Latin affixes and roots can lighten the learning burden of word forms. Graves, Rudo, Sales, and Baumann (2012), doing a review of the literature, similarly suggest that the benefits of understanding Greek and Latin affixes and roots are manifold. Greek and Latin affixes and roots help learners to learn the meaning of new words. They also lead to vocabulary building and expansion. For example, the learning burden of the word incredible can be heavy for students since there seems to be no way to make a connection between the written form and its meaning. Yet, if students are taught that the prefix in- means “not,” cred or creed means “believe” or “trust,” and the adjective suffix –ible means “capable of,” then it will be easier for them to understand why this word is used to describe something unusual or surprising. Furthermore, an understanding of the meaning of cred or creed leads to an understanding of the meanings of creditable, credulous, creed, credible, incredible, credentials, accredit, and discredit. In a similar way, if students know that dome derives from the Greek word domos, which means “house,” then they may get an image of what the Astrodome or Tokyo Dome actually looks like. Learning the Greek word domos also helps students to figure out the meanings of domestic, domesticate, domesticity, domicile, dominate, domination, dominant, dominion, dominance, domineering, and dominion.

Because a very large percentage of prefixed and suffixed words exist in school reading materials (Graves, Rudo, Sales & Baumann, 2012), it seems sensible to support the claim that an understanding of Greek and Latin affixes and roots is useful for students regarding word recognition and expansion. Moreover, students should be made aware that learning common affixes and roots bears resemblance to the way students learned Chinese radicals – the graphical components of Chinese characters – in elementary school. This awareness may ease the pain of word recognition and memorization. Again, more research in L2 is needed to show how the knowledge of affixes and roots contributes to word learning.

In much the same way that we teach affixes and roots to students, sharing the origins of words and their meanings with students in the classroom also break the teaching routine and help to arouse students’ interest in vocabulary learning. Ilson (1983) claims that the beginnings or etymological information in dictionaries are good instructional materials that enhance students’ interest in vocabulary learning and make words easier to remember. Imagine when the word chaos is presented to students in a sentence like The house was in complete chaos. Initially, the word might look and sound strange to students. But if teachers can explain to students that the word chaos in Greek mythology means the dark and formless state before the universe is created, or even show them a picture of chaos, students may conjure a mental image of a place in complete disorder every time they see the word or try to recall the meaning of chaos. Second, teachers may explain the meaning of an echo among the hills being the sound being sent back or repeated when we shout in the mountains, and the word may
still look and sound foreign to students at the outset. However, the meaning of *echo* may become clearer if students know the story of Echo, a young and beautiful nymph in Greek methodology who can only repeat another’s words because she annoyed Zeus’ wife, Hera, and her voice was taken away. Third, also originating from Greek methodology is the word *museum*. If students know that this word originally means a shrine of the Muses, the Goddesses of Art and Science, then they may better understand why a building where objects of historical or artistic interest are kept and displayed is called a museum.

English loan words in Chinese may also help to make English spoken forms more euphonious to students. It is not difficult to find Chinese words which are derived from English. These words are called loan words or borrowings. English loan words in Chinese are large in number; they cover everything from brand names (e.g., *Duo-fen/多芬*, a brand of shampoo and body wash, is the Chinese equivalent for the English brand name Dove, and *chuen-pin-kang-na/純品康納* is derived from the global juice business Tropicana Products, Inc.), to technical words (e.g., *ka-lu-li/卡路里* is borrowed from the English word *calorie*, and *shie-sz-di-li/歇斯底里* is loaned from English *hysterical*), and to everyday vocabulary (e.g., *mei-nai-tz/美乃滋* is the equivalent for *mayonnaise*, and *bei-guo/貝果* is a borrowed word for bagel). Although not retaining their original pronunciation, these loan words or borrowings are phonologically similar to their original English words. Thus, students in Taiwan can find *hormone, bacon, lace, lesbian, model, lottery, romantic,* and *bikini* easier to remember when they realize that for each of these words there is a Chinese equivalent that students can refer to (e.g., *he-er-meng/賀爾蒙, pei-gen/培根, lei-sz/蕾絲, lei-sz-bian/蕾絲邊, mo-te-er/模特兒, le-tou/樂透, luo-man-di-ke/羅曼蒂克, and bi-ji-ni/比基尼*).

Also, because of transliteration the meaning of these words can oftentimes be predicted from their pronunciation. What is suggested here is that teachers can lower the learning burden of English words if students get the idea that the words they are learning have been transliterated into Chinese. Still, more research is needed to produce hard evidence on how loan words or borrowings can help the recognition and spelling of their English equivalents.

### iii. Meaning

Just as English written and spoken forms are problematic to many students, so is the richness of word meaning. A large number of English words contain more than one meaning, and this increases memory load. For example, in the Longman Active Study English-Chinese Dictionary (2001), the word *suit* has four different meanings when used as a noun: “a set of outer clothes made of the same material usually including a short coat with trousers or skirt,” “a set of clothes for a special purpose,” “one of the four sets of cards used in games,” or “a lawsuit.” Furthermore, it can be used as a verb to mean “to satisfy or please,” or “to match or look right with” (p. 865). While some concepts may overlap (e.g., a set of outer cloths vs. sets of card), others denote completely different ideas (e.g., to satisfy as opposed to match). Teaching these various meanings and uses of a word at the same time may confuse students and make the meanings difficult to recall and access. Thus, to clarify the various meanings of a word, teachers need to take into consideration the relationships between different meanings. In other words, if two different meanings overlap in some way and the learning of one meaning will trigger the learning of another, then they can be introduced together. On the other hand, if the learning of one meaning will not facilitate the learning of the other (e.g., a *suit* as a set of clothes as opposed to a lawsuit),
then they should be taught as separate words to avoid interference (Nation, 1990).

The learning burden of word meaning may also vary from the way meanings are learned. Most of the time a Chinese translation instead of an English definition is given when a word is first introduced or learned. While sometimes this may work, other times it makes word meaning more confusing and difficult to access. For example, to understand the meaning of the word *suit* in the sentence *The man wearing a suit on the sideline is the coach*, students may find a number of Chinese translations, such as *yi-tau-yi-fu/*一套衣服, *tau-jaung/*套装, *shi-fu/*西服, *shi-jaung/*西装, *li-fu/*礼服 or *fu-jaung/*服装, in an English-Chinese bilingual dictionary. Although most of these translations share the concept of a formal dress for special occasions such as a wedding or funeral ceremony, each translation is used for a particular context. Having many translations simultaneously becomes a problem and makes the meaning more difficult to access and remember. Similarly, many local teachers prefer to use verbal explanations, such as translating the words into Chinese, to teach the meaning of words. Though time saving when teaching many words in a reading text, defining a word by translation might not be advantageous to students and should be done with care. Concepts in English and Chinese are not always the same, and a simple Chinese translation is usually not sufficient to convey a concept in English. However, this is not to assert that local teachers should abandon translation as a way of presenting word meanings in the classroom. Rather, if the concepts in English and Chinese are the same, it is not necessary for teachers to disregard translation as a way of presenting the meaning of words. Nation (1990) makes a list of possible ways to teach the meanings of words (e.g., by demonstration or pictures and by verbal explanation) and suggests that to make the meaning of words clear to students, teachers should make use of two or more methods when presenting meaning, such as using a contextual definition with translation or a definition by demonstration with contextual examples (p. 63). Namely, a Chinese translation with a picture followed by a detailed explanation in Chinese or how this word appears in various instances would be more effective in conveying the meaning of *suit* than the oversimplified *tau-jaung/*套装 translation.

iv. Word Use

Adding to the complexity of English word learning for students is the usage of words, one of the five indispensable steps in the vocabulary learning process (Hatch & Brown, 1995). For example, students may quickly grasp the meaning of *count* as saying numbers in order. But they may have problems with its many usages; according to the Merriam-Webster online dictionary (2014), there are seven grammar patterns when *count* is used as a transitive verb, and six more as an intransitive verb, not counting its numerous collocations. Thus, it is understandable that students with limited understanding of its usage would make a sentence such as *The price was counted wrong* when they actually meant the clerk rang up an incorrect amount for an item. Similarly, students may find it hard to understand the meaning of *count* when it is used with other words such as *count in, count on, or count out*.

Time spent on spelling rules and word parts in the classroom is definitely worth the effort. It facilitates word recognition and helps lighten the learning burden of words. However, teaching words out of context should take up only a small part of the whole teaching process. Competence involving grammatical patterns (e.g., the sentence patterns where the word can be used) and collocations (e.g., the words that go together) should also be given
equal attention in the classroom. In fact, the importance of collocational competence in vocabulary acquisition has gained much attention in recent years. More and more researchers in this field are calling for the inclusion of teaching collocations in vocabulary learning (Hedge, 2000; Lewis, 1993, 1997, 2000; Nation, 2008; Pavicic, 2008). They argue that in our daily lives we communicate with chunks of words rather than individual words and that learning vocabulary as chunks may help students make less mistakes in word choice and grammar patterns. Thus, instead of asking students to memorize the individual word honor, it might be more useful to teach the word in context such as May I have the honor of doing so or I feel it a great honor to be invited. Similarly, merely explaining to students the meaning of auction would be impractical if students do not know the meaning of at auction or if they do not know how to use the phrase put up for auction.

However, learning and teaching collocations is no easy task but quite overwhelming for students and teachers because collocations are extremely numerous when compared with single words. Some collocations are simple in terms of structure such as widely influential, advocate a reform, and a sharp decline, while others are longer phrases such as feel gratitude toward someone, stay in your comfort zone, and my lips are sealed. Some are firmly fixed in usage (e.g., take advantage of, as a rule, and the tip of the iceberg), whereas others are quite flexible in word combinations (e.g., a waiting list, a shopping list, and a boarding list). Moreover, there is usually no explanation for why some words collocate and others do not. To be able to help students attain native accuracy and fluency, teachers would have to provide many meaning-focused activities in listening, reading, speaking, and writing. Through listening and reading, students can gain knowledge of collocations; through speaking and writing, students can understand how far away they are from language accuracy (Nation, 2008).

II. Classroom Teaching

Apart from introducing new vocabulary words and helping students reduce the learning burden in the classroom, it is the teacher’s responsibility to give students opportunities to practice such as using words in a variety of contexts and prompting them to recall words from memory to express ideas (Pavicic, 2008; Stoller & Grabe, 1993). As Nation (1990) has noted, developing and strengthening students’ vocabulary is not less important than introducing vocabulary to them. To provide students with maximum learning opportunities in the classroom, researchers in this field have provided some guidelines and suggestions for teachers to use in the classroom.

To begin with, it is critical to review new vocabulary words immediately after they are introduced in the classroom. Then teachers can increasingly lengthen the interval between each review (Nation, 1990; Oxford, 1990; Schmitt, 2000). By doing this, students will be more inclined to retain the new vocabulary words for longer periods of time. For instance, effectiveness is increased when teachers review newly learned vocabulary words at the end of the class, three days later, and one week later.

For helping students review new words in the classroom, it is preferable that teachers diversify classroom activities in which students manipulate new words. Pavicic (2008) outlines a number of activities from literature that help students review and consolidate vocabulary words: mechanical repetition, copying words, word manipulation, integrating new words with already known words, semantic elaboration, creating mental images, personalization, tasks for word identification, tasks for recalling words from memory, tasks for expansion of lexical
knowledge, productive use of words, and multiple encounters with the word. While the first two activities are of a more mechanical nature, the other activities require a deeper level of engagement. Examples of activities which need higher level thinking include stimulating students to actively participate in the learning process, recalling words from memory, and relating new vocabulary words to personal experience or real life events. Pavicic (2008) concludes that “[f]ormal L2 vocabulary instruction should be based on a variety of teaching techniques and activities in order to cater for individual learning styles and to break the classroom routines” (p. 23). In other words, diversifying classroom activities can also help students with different learning abilities and keep them interested in learning.

Aside from the numerous activities mentioned, frequent and regular vocabulary tests are good measurements that check students’ progress as well as enhance students’ memory. “Good vocabulary teaching techniques should include an opportunity for testing” emphasizes Nation (1990), “so that the teacher and learner can get information about the progress of the learning” (p. 56). When students are tested on vocabulary words they have learned, teachers can ask students to spell out the words or write down the Chinese definition. Teachers can even ask students to write down opposites or definitions, put the words in sentences, use descriptions to show word meaning, or ask and answer questions using the words that have been learned (Nation, 1990). These different test techniques get students to try harder to recall the meaning of newly learned vocabulary words, which in turn encourage memorization.

III. Vocabulary Learning Strategies

It is impossible to teach all the vocabulary words that students will need to learn in the classroom. Therefore, it is crucial that teachers help students develop some vocabulary learning strategies in the classroom so that students can work on new vocabulary words individually outside the classroom (Nation, 1990; Oxford & Scarcella, 1994; Pavicic, 2008; Stoller & Grabe, 1993).

One strategy that might be easy for students to use and implement individually outside the classroom is learning from word lists – one of the most common and favorable ways among students to review vocabulary before tests. Although many teachers and researchers are not in favor of this technique, claiming that doing this does not help retain long-term memory of vocabulary words, other researchers argue that learning from word lists is not completely ineffective (Carter & McCarthy, 1988; Graves, 1987; Nation, 1982, 1990, 2008; Nation & Webb, 2011; Stoller & Grabe, 1993). It may help language learners obtain a large amount of vocabulary in a short time. Also, studies show that vocabulary words learned in this way can still be recalled after a couple of weeks. Still, to make this learning technique more efficient, it is advisable that the word form and its meaning not be shown together. In other words, to stimulate recall and memorization, the Chinese translation or definition of vocabulary words should be hidden from view, for instance, on the back of the same page. Also, in order to prevent a serial learning effect, words in the word lists should be reshuffled. This can be done by using small word cards. Although many textbooks and English learning magazines provide ready-to-use word cards or word lists to support vocabulary learning, students should be encouraged to create their own word cards and carry them around so that words can be reviewed frequently. In short, learning from word lists should be seen as an initial step to expanding vocabulary. Dismissing this learning technique as not useful early
on is unreasonable. So long as this technique is put into practice with proper planning, it may be an effective method of vocabulary learning.

Other vocabulary learning strategies that could be used along with word list learning are mnemonic techniques – one of the many memory-enhancing strategies (Nation, 2008). A number of researchers favor these techniques for vocabulary learning on the grounds that mnemonic techniques are more efficient and provide a more interesting way in remembering words as opposed to other learning strategies such as rote learning or learning with synonyms (Pressley, Levin, & Delaney, 1982; Sagarra & Alba, 2006; Zhang & Schumm, 2000). Mnemonic techniques can take various forms; they can be visual, verbal, or mixed mnemonics (Pavicic, 2008). One mnemonic technique that is often used by foreign language learners is called the Keyword Method, in which learners construct an interesting connection between the word to be learned and an acoustically similar word in their first language. To teach this method, teachers can demonstrate the steps of selecting a key word and how to make an association used to recall the meaning of the word. Take the word crave as an example. How can students relate the spoken form of this word to its meaning? First, have students think of a Chinese word that sounds like crave. They may probably come up with the word ke/渴, the key word which means thirsty and sounds partially like crave. Then have students imagine a person who walks unsteadily and is thirsty for water in the desert. The sound of the Chinese word and the image created build a connection between the form and the meaning of the word crave, which means wanting to have something very much. Take for another example the word spontaneous. This word may look and sound tricky for students. But by using the Keyword Method, students may find that spon- sounds a little like relaxing oneself in Chinese and tan means dark skin. Then have them create a picture of a person who relaxes oneself on the beach and gets a suntan. This mental image would suggest indirectly the meaning of spontaneous, which means something from natural feelings. Students can use the key word created by the teacher or they can be encouraged to select their own key words to create associations while memorizing new vocabulary words outside the classroom. No matter what key word is used, the more interesting and fascinating the key word is, the easier it will be to remember (Nation, 1990).

Even though the Keyword Method may be interesting for meaning recall, the effectiveness of this method should not be overestimated. According to Nation (1990) and Hulstijn (2000), the Keyword Method is just one of the many vocabulary learning techniques used to learn foreign vocabulary. It is not without limitations. First, it is not always easy to find a key word that sounds like the word to be remembered. Moreover, it may not contribute to the learning of spelling and pronunciation (Pressley et al., 1982). In addition, there is mixed evidence as to whether or not the Keyword Method leads to long-term memory (Nation & Webb, 2011). Over and above, special training is invariably required if students are expected to use this technique effectively. Thus, to make the Keyword Method more practicable, it is recommended that teachers use this method in company with students in the classroom on a regular basis (Pavicic, 2008).

Learning the skills of breaking words down into prefixes, roots, and suffixes might also be considered a valuable strategy for students to expand vocabulary outside the classroom (Graves, 1987; Marzano, 2010; Nation, 2008; Stoller & Grabe, 1993). Students need to be aware that more than half of the low-frequency English words (about 60%) are derived from Greek, Latin, or French, and these
words usually consist of a number of meaningful parts (Nation, 1990). Thus, some common prefixes and suffixes with their meanings should be taught and learned in the classroom (e.g., prefixes showing location, time and order, or negative prefixes; suffixes making nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs). More complicated but still common word roots can be included later (e.g., aster-, bio-, chrom-, dem-, ego-, and front-). When a word that contains a prefix, suffix, or root is introduced, teachers can break the word into meaningful parts and relate this word with other known words which have the same word parts (e.g., bene- good + -fit make and pro-forward + -fit make). Outside the classroom, students should be encouraged to look at reference books or dictionaries for information about affixes and roots while they are learning word lists. By regularly raising students’ awareness of word roots, prefixes, and suffixes, words with similar or complicated spelling can become easier to remember.

Teaching students how to use bilingual dictionaries may also be a useful way to help students learn new vocabulary words independently (Grabe & Stoller, 1997; Lupescu & Day, 1993; Nation, 2008; Pavicic, 2008). Lupescu and Day (1993) found that the strategy of using a bilingual dictionary while reading influences vocabulary learning and retention. Students should have an understanding that dictionaries are useful resources for vocabulary learning. They encompass a lot of information, such as spelling, pronunciation, parts of speech, definition, comparative and superlative forms of adjectives, synonyms, antonyms, sentence patterns, collocations, and even word etymology. If they obtain some practice in using dictionaries, they could build a more thorough word knowledge and strengthen their vocabulary learning. Nation (2008) lists a number of strategies to help vocabulary learning through the use of a dictionary. These include finding the core meaning, looking for related words, reading, and picturing example sentences.

Vocabulary learning strategies mentioned above are just a few students can try. Students should be encouraged to use and experiment with various others. These may include watching English TV shows or using computer learning programs. Whatever strategies are used, it is important to point out that each strategy complements the others and that students should be encouraged to try every possible strategy and continue to use them so long as the strategy works (Pavicic, 2008).

IV. Conclusion

For EFL students in Taiwan, vocabulary learning is important but challenging. Consequently, vocabulary instruction should be a priority in the language classroom. It should be systematic, frequent, and effective. Teachers should identify the sources of learning difficulties to reduce students’ anxiety and learning burdens. Furthermore, they should provide students with opportunities to encounter and to use new words in different contexts. Through vocabulary activities in the classroom, students can consolidate the words that are learned. In addition, teachers should help students become independent word learners by teaching them word learning strategies because vocabulary learning is a continuous process that can last a life time.

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摘要

本文的主旨在探討台灣英文教育的字彙教學。首先剖析學生在英文字音、字形、字義以及用法學習上的困難之處，同時提出可以減輕學習負擔的教學方法。文中同時探討老師在課堂上如何透過有效的教學方式以及不同的教學活動來幫助學生輕鬆的學習英文字彙。最後本文分析可以用來幫助學生自主學習英文字彙的學習方法，包含英文單字卡的使用、關鍵字學習法、字綴的分析以及雙語字典的使用。

關鍵詞：字彙教學、字形字音、學習負擔、字彙學習方法、關鍵字學習法、雙語字典

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