

the iafor

journal of language learning

Volume 3 – Issue 1 – Spring 2017

Editor: Ebru Melek Koç



ISSN: 2188-9554

iafor

IAFOR Journal of Language Learning
Volume 3 – Issue I

IAFOR Publications

IAFOR Journal of Language Learning

Editor

Ebru Melek Koç, Inonu University, Turkey

Editorial Board

Brad Blackstone, Singapore Institute of Technology, Singapore

Eddy Li, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom

José Medina, University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain

Reza Zabihi, University of Isfahan, Iran

Published by The International Academic Forum (IAFOR), Japan

Executive Editor: Joseph Haldane

Editorial Assistance: Clare Midgley

IAFOR Publications

Sakae 1-16-26 – 201, Naka Ward, Aichi, Japan 460-0008

IAFOR Journal of Language Learning

Volume 3 – Issue 1 – Spring 2017

Published April 28, 2017

IAFOR Publications © Copyright 2017

Individual articles are published under the
Creative Commons 4.0 Attribution Non Commercial International licence.

ISSN: 2188-9554

Online: ijll.iafor.org

Cover image: Flickr/Ann Wuyts

IAFOR Journal of Language Learning

Volume 3 – Issue 1 – Spring 2017

Edited by Ebru Melek Koç

Table of Contents

Notes on Contributors	1
Introduction	2
English Learning Strategies among EFL Learners: A Narrative Approach Hoang Nguyen & Daniel R. Terry	4
Using Learners' First Language in EFL Classrooms Eman Alshehri	22
Breadth of Productive Vocabulary Knowledge of Pre-Service Teachers: Basis for the Proposed Intervention Strategies in Vocabulary Enhancement Cecilia L. Calub & Francelle L. Calub	34

Notes on Contributors

Dr Hoang Nguyen has extensive teaching experience at both undergraduate and graduate levels in various subjects, including pedagogical approaches, linguistics, curriculum design and assessment, communication, and research methods. She received her PhD in 2013 and has been active in research and publications. Her research background is in education, applied linguistics, language development, rural health and community health.

Dr Daniel Terry, BN MntHlth PhD RN, has a background in nursing, with a Masters in International Health with a focus on public health in developing countries and the health and well-being of Asian migrants, including their acculturation to the Australian health system. His main focus is currently on chronic ill-health, health workforce, and primary health care access in rural contexts, but he has keen interest in critical discourse analysis and the relationship between language, culture and society within a socio-cultural context.

Dr Eman Al-Shehri is Assistant Professor of Applied Linguistics at the English Language Institute at King Abdulaziz University, Saudi Arabia. She holds a PhD in Applied Linguistics from the University of Salford, United Kingdom. Her research interests include second language acquisition, L2 motivation, and EFL teacher education.

Dr Cecillia Liwanag Calub is an English professor at Tarlac State University, Philippines, and is Area Head of the MAEd English program in the same university. She holds the following degrees: Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education (BSEEd), with specialization in English, *cum laude*; Bachelor of Science in Secondary Education (BSEd), major in English, minor in History; Master of Arts in Education, major in Guidance and Counseling; and Doctor of Philosophy in Linguistics, major in Applied Linguistics. She was awarded Outstanding Dissertation in Linguistics Research in 2005 by the Philippine Normal University – Manila. She taught at public elementary school for almost nine years and at high school for almost eight years before transferring to Tarlac State University, where she presently handles college undergraduate and graduate classes. Like many university faculty members, she is actively involved in extension services and in research. She has conducted a number of research projects focusing on linguistics, language education, and gender advocacy and has presented her papers in institutional in-house research reviews, as well as at national and international conferences. Some of the research papers she presented for reviews and competition have won awards.

Francelle L. Calub is an instructor at the College of Arts and Social Sciences, Tarlac State University, Philippines. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in English and a Masters in Education, with a major in English Language Teaching. She is presently pursuing her PhD in Language Education at Saint Louis University, Baguio City, Philippines. She started her teaching career as an English lecturer at the College of Arts and Social Sciences, Tarlac State University, Tarlac City and has been teaching there for almost eight years. She is actively involved in community service.

Introduction

It is my distinct pleasure to introduce the latest issue of the *IAFOR Journal of Language Learning*. With this issue the journal continues to present a diverse selection of stimulating articles from scholars in the field of language learning.

In the first article **Dr Hoang Nguyen** and **Dr Daniel Terry** examine the use of LLS among Vietnamese EFL students and staff in the context of Vietnam. They discuss how learning strategies alone cannot determine success in English learning, and that factors such as an interest in English, an aptitude for language learning, effort investment in learning, or determination are also important. They conclude by noting that there is a need to move forward in language learning strategies that promote the student's ability to find what works for them, to overcome or drop old strategies and be flexible in trying new and unfamiliar strategies.

The second article, by **Dr Eman Al-Shehri**, explores the attitudes of EFL teachers towards using learners' first language in the context of a Saudi university. The results shed light on the practical functions of first language usage. Dr Al-Shehri considers the need to introduce a framework that clearly identifies both how and when to use L1, which could make the use of L1 more appropriate by outlining where L1 can be used effectively.

The third article, by **Dr Cecillia Liwanag Calub** and **Francelle L. Calub**, highlights the importance of vocabulary knowledge as a component of linguistic competence, which, together with discourse competence, socio-cultural competence and strategic competence, forms the four-fold framework of communicative proficiency. The findings from this study call for recognition of the importance of improving depth of vocabulary knowledge in learners' ESL learning processes and teaching of vocabulary in the classroom.

I hope that you find the April issue valuable. I respectfully add my deepest thanks and gratitude to the anonymous reviewers and the members of the editorial board for the time and effort that they put into our journal. Some of the reviewers also serve on the journal's editorial board.

We welcome your comments so that we may improve the journal in future volumes. We invite you to submit articles on any topics that are within the scope of the journal.

Thank you for your time and please enjoy this issue.

Ebru Melek Koç
Editor

English Learning Strategies among EFL Learners: A Narrative Approach

Hoang Nguyen
University of Tasmania, Australia

Daniel R. Terry
University of Melbourne, Australia

Abstract

Language learning strategies (LLSs) are believed to be influenced by individual differences as well as environmental and contextual factors. Therefore, the effective use of LLSs is determined by various factors, including both learning and learner variables. This dynamic and complex nature of LLSs renders it appropriate to use a qualitative approach to undertake research into this issue. This paper details the qualitative findings from a larger-scale study on English LLSs among tertiary students in the context of Vietnam. The data was gathered from semi-structured interviews with 10 English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching staff and 10 EFL students at a university in Vietnam. Interviews were conducted in Vietnamese lasting 30 to 40 minutes, and were audio recorded with consent. The interview questions for students focussed on their general attitudes and lived experiences of LLSs. Similarly, the interview questions for EFL staff were structured around their general attitudes. The interview data were translated into English, rechecked, and thematically analysed. The findings are of a textual and interpretative nature with emerging themes and issues related to the attitudes towards and actual use of LLSs among the target learners. The findings provide practical implications for practitioners, researchers and educational policy makers alike.

Keywords: language learning strategies, Vietnamese, English, second language learning, tertiary students

1 Introduction

1.1 Successful Language Learning Strategies

In the field of second/foreign language teaching and learning, the interests of practitioners and researchers have been geared to the language learning strategies (LLSs) selection and adoption of successful language learners. The suggestion that a good language learner may have some special strategies that others could learn from was initially introduced by Rubin (1975). Using a mixed methods approach including classroom observation, self-observation, and interviews, Rubin proposed a list of seven characteristics of good language learners. They include the ability to make good guesses, communicate in many ways, tolerate mistakes, pay attention to form and communication, practise the language regularly, monitor one's own language use, and understand and attend to meaning.

With the same goal, to help less successful learners enhance their success, Stern (1975) introduced his description of good language learners with ten LLSs, which were drawn from his interpretation of language competence and second language acquisition; his experience as a teacher and learner; and his review of the literature of language learning. The most significant elements in his proposed strategies were the initiative and activeness of the learners in approaching a learning task or problem. Findings by Rubin (1975) and Stern (1975) have been supported and further developed by many subsequent researchers in the field (Green & Oxford, 1995; Naiman, Froehlich, Stern, & Todesco, 1978; Rubin & Thompson, 1982).

These early research studies have set the scene for an emerging interest in how language learners themselves go about learning and what teachers can do to assist learners during that process. However, Rubin (1975) recognized the influence that many variables, such as target language proficiency, age, situation, cultural differences and learning styles, may have on the deployment of LLSs. As such, Naiman et al. (1978, p. 224) stressed that there were no “predetermined overall characteristics” among good language learners due to the various individual pathways that could lead to successful language learning. This emphasis on individual variation in LLS use has become a principle for most research efforts in the field. On the one hand, it highlights the issue of individual differences and underscores the flexibility in language learning strategy deployment. On the other hand, it puts a restriction on the generalizations to any target population beyond the sample of any research findings about the good language learners.

1.2 Learning Environment and LLSs

According to socio-cultural theory, social interaction and cultural institutions play an important role in an individual's cognitive growth and development (Donato & MacCormick, 1994). From this socio-cultural perspective, the learning environment and contexts are influential upon individuals' strategic orientations to language learning. Scarcella and Oxford (1992), Lantoff and Appel (1994) and Donato and MacCormick (1994) discovered that social interaction had a crucial role to play in LLS use. Likewise, Gao (2006) pointed to the dynamicity of LLS selection and use under the influence of different learning contexts. His comparative qualitative study suggested that the popular language learning discourses and assessment methods had influenced the learners' frequency and choices of strategy use.

More recently, Huang and Andrews (2010) examined the impact of the learning context and environment on LLS use among 47 senior secondary students in mainland China. Their findings revealed that in the mainstream exam-orientated environment of Mainland China, the general orientation of strategies for a variety of classroom learning tasks was determined by

the “grade-getting” goal. In addition, the results indicated that the processes of strategy development and use were mediated by learners' situated learning experience; by cultural artefacts (tasks); and by interpersonal interactions with their teachers, peers and family members. From a holistic view, the learners' strategy employment was situated in their communities of language learning practices and social cultures.

The use of LLS reflects individual differences and they have a propensity to be continuously shaped and reshaped by the environmental and contextual factors. The dynamicity and complexity of LLSs are under the influence of different learning contexts and environments, which render it appropriate to use a qualitative approach to undertake investigations. This is particularly vital when examining the LLSs among tertiary students in Vietnam, where research into LLS remains in the early stages of development (Duong & Nguyen, 2006).

The overall study aimed to examine the frequency and patterns of LLS use among Vietnamese EFL tertiary students; the relationship between LLS use and self-rated English proficiency; and the specific aim here was to investigate and evaluate the use of LLS among Vietnamese EFL students and staff in the context of Vietnam.

2 Methods

This study utilized the conceptual framework of socio-cultural theory, in that learning is a social process where the development of cognition occurs through the interaction with others in a society and also influenced by the culture where an individual is situated (Donato & McCormick, 1994; Lantolf, 2000; Lantolf, Thorne, & Poehner, 2015). As such, in this study, the perceptions, attitudes and experiences concerning actual strategy use under the influence of socio-cultural factors were examined qualitatively using in-depth interviews.

2.1 Participants

Purposeful sampling was used to recruit the study participants, who were deemed information-rich cases (Patton, 2002), and therefore could represent the best to “understand the central phenomenon” (Creswell, 2011, p. 206). The sample consisted of 10 English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching staff and 10 EFL students at a university in Vietnam. The staff, including 3 males and 7 females, were between 26 and 50 years of age and their teaching experience ranged from 2 to 20 years at tertiary level. The sampled students were also chosen to reflect the diversity of backgrounds in terms of gender (3 males, 7 females); self-rated English proficiency (ranging from Limited to Very Good); and academic major (both English and non-English majors).

2.2 Data Collection Tool and Procedure

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect the data. Two interview guides were prepared for student and staff participants based on a review of relevant literature. The interview questions for students were designed to focus on their general attitudes and their own lived experiences of LLSs. Similarly, the interview questions for EFL staff were structured around their general attitudes. Open ended questions beginning with “what”, “how”, or “have you ever” were mainly used to probe for meaning-rich responses (See Appendix 1).

The interview questions were pretested among 4 participants who belonged to the target population. The participants were asked about the appropriateness of the questions and the ease of understanding the questions. If questions were considered too personal or sensitive, the

participants were asked how these questions could be altered. This process of prestressing improved question development and refinement.

Each interview was conducted in Vietnamese, was between 30 and 40 minutes and was audio recorded with the consent of each participant. The interview data were then translated into English, rechecked and coded to ensure confidentiality.

2.3 Data Analysis

The qualitative data collected from the interviews were transcribed, organized and analysed with the assistance of the qualitative research software package, QSR NVivo 9. Initially, descriptive coding was performed to help with the data identification. Accordingly, student participants were coded on the basis of their demographic information such as gender (M/F), year group (Y1, Y2, Y3), or academic major (E for English major and NE for Non-English major). Likewise, information about gender (F/M) and the interview order (1, 2, 3 and so on) was used to code the data of the teacher participants.

This study utilized a constant comparative method of analysis in organizing the gathered data to enable thematic analysis of the content. The constant comparative method is a process of comparing and contrasting

all intellectual tasks during analysis: forming categories, establishing the boundaries of the categories, assigning the segments to categories, summarizing the content of each category, finding negative evidence, etc. The goal is to discern conceptual similarities, to refine the discriminative power of categories, and to discover patterns. (Tesch, 1990, p. 96)

During this process, data considered critical to the research aims and the intended analysis were systematically organized into themes and subthemes (Boeije, 2002; Fram, 2013). This process allowed the researcher to determine the key categories or concepts and make logical connections between these categories.

3 Results and Discussion

The richness of the qualitative data collected in this study allowed for a clear understanding of the complex web of perceptions, and attitudes in relation to LLSs, which might have an impact on the day-to-day teaching and learning practices of the EFL teacher and student participants. According to the analysis, a number of key themes emerged, including: 1) the role of LLSs; 2) recommended and non-recommended strategies; 3) barriers to LLS development; and 4) shared characteristics of strategy use.

3.1 The Role of LLSs

The data drawn from the staff interviews suggested that there was a unanimous acknowledgement of the importance of LLSs in the learning process, although they were believed to play various roles in English learning. To illustrate what teacher participants were inferring, some selected comments are provided below.

I think English learning strategies are very important for learners to boost their language learning and have scaffolding to pursue their lifelong language learning on their own. (Teacher 2-F)

Strategies are really important in directing and orienting students in their learning. I think without learning strategies, learning will become a passive process. (Teacher 7-F)

I think to be good learners; it is a must to have the right learning strategies. (Teacher 10-F)

Coinciding with the overall positive attitude of the teacher participants towards LLSs, most student interviewees placed an importance on the role of LLSs in their language achievement. Most students indicated that strategies contributed a great deal to the learning process, especially by enhancing the effectiveness and quality of learning. The attitudes of the student participants were clearly reflected in the following remarks:

English learning is a complex and long-term process, so we need to have the right strategies in order to master the target language in the most effective way and in the shortest time. I believe about 80% of our success in English learning is determined by strategies. (Student 3-F-Y3-E)

I think learning strategies are very important in our success in learning English because having the right strategies will help increase the effectiveness of our learning process and reduce the time needed to achieve a learning target. (Student 6-M-Y2-N)

Among the factors that contribute to our success in learning English, learning strategies are the most important. In fact, they play the deciding role. (Student 7-F-Y1-N)

The significant role of LLSs, in some cases, meant that students would encounter many difficulties in learning English if they did not use learning strategies in an effective way. Commenting on this issue, one student participant specified a case from her observations:

I think strategies have an extremely important role in learning English... I have seen one IT [Information Technology] student struggling with English learning and when I approached him, I can say that improper use of learning strategies is what hinders him from progressing. (Student 10-F-Y4-E)

This is an encouraging finding because the positive attitudes of teachers and students will be a favourable prerequisite for the promotion of LLSs in the educational system. Other researchers (e.g. Jiang & Smith, 2009; Zhang & Goh, 2006) have also found similar results regarding the belief of students in the usefulness and significant role of LLSs. As Richardson (1996) stated, learners are expected to act mostly upon their beliefs and Rokeach (1968, p. 113) indicated beliefs or attitudes are “predispositions to actions”. When students place an emphasis on the role of LLSs, they are more likely to invest time and effort into the exploration of learning strategies to enhance performance.

However, learning strategies alone cannot determine success in English learning, despite their crucial role. In order to achieve the ultimate goal of mastering English, many student interviewees stated that there were other contributing factors. Those factors were, for example, an interest in English, an aptitude for language learning, effort investment in learning, or determination. The following comments typically illustrate the views of the student participants regarding this issue.

To me, besides learning strategies, we need to be persistent and hardworking. Once we have set a certain goal, whether it is short-term or long-term, we have to try to achieve

it. So, learning strategy is necessary, but they are not enough to guarantee success. (Student 2-F-Y2-E)

Strategies play a very important role... But strategies alone are not enough. It requires other factors as well, such as an interest in learning the language and an aptitude for the language. (Student 4-F-Y1-E)

In my view, learning strategies contribute to decide success in English performance, along with time, and effort. (Student 5-F-Y4-E)

3.2 Recommended and Non-recommended Strategies

During the interviews, the teacher and student participants shared their experiences in LLS use and their stories revealed specific strategies which were either recommended or non-recommended in English learning. On the part of the teachers, their judgment about the effectiveness of certain strategies was built upon their own experiences as a successful language learner and as a keen observer of their students' performance. The strategies considered to be essential were broadly associated with learning skills, such as reading, speaking, listening or writing. These strategies served as an important guidance for the teachers in shaping their approaches in everyday English teaching. The following comments specify those highly recommended strategies.

In my reading classes, semantic mapping, using related words or pictures and words, getting the idea quickly like skimming or scanning, guessing intelligibly, analysing, summarizing are especially emphasized. (Teacher 2-F)

The strategies I think students need in writing are recording English phrases, using English-English dictionaries, keeping a diary or a blog in English, and writing a new piece based on a structured model. (Teacher 7-F)

Regarding speaking skills, I guess students need certain strategies such as imitating a particular speaker in terms of pronunciation, intonation, stress, gesture, eye contact, etc. A good strategy is to imagine specific situations and say things in their mind or to themselves. (Teacher 8-M)

Although the list of effective strategies specified by the teachers was not exhaustive, they were valid strategies, which had been implemented and observed to work within the classroom by the teachers within study. This general agreement on their effectiveness provided an indication of the value of these strategies.

On the other hand, the lived experiences among the students regarding their use of strategies in English learning uncovered several ineffective strategies, especially within English learning at the tertiary level. When experimenting with various learning strategies, the students realized that not every strategy contributed positively to their learning. These strategies were often related to the traditional learning of vocabulary and grammar, which were very popular at more junior levels of education, such as high school. This was illustrated by the following comments:

Talking about grammar, just like many of my friends, I did a lot of exercises in grammar books, but I did not learn much from them. When it comes to actual use in real life, I cannot recall any of what I've learned from books. (Student 4-F-Y1-E)

I remember when I was in grade 8, my English teacher told me and my friends to learn new words by rewriting 10 times each. I did, but it did not work for me. It seemed to be a waste of time because although I can remember the spelling of the word, it does not mean that I can use it when I need. (Student 5-F-Y4-E)

While some students did not feel there was value through traditional strategies, such as grammar exercises or rewriting new words, other students acknowledged their value at a certain stage of their learning. Students dropped certain strategies only because those strategies no longer satisfied their learning needs at the current level. Two students stated:

I used to rewrite words several times until I remember the spellings of words. It worked for me those days. It did. But I have stopped using that strategy. Now I try to learn the whole sentence that includes the new word. (Student 7-F-Y1-N)

At high school, I was taught to translate a complete sentence from English into Vietnamese and rewrite these two sentences many times to remember them. I think that's an appropriate strategy for low level learners... looking back I still think it is an effective strategy to build vocabulary and it also helps with my translation skills later on. (Student 3-F-Y3-E)

Researchers in Southeast Asia, such as LoCastro (1994), reported similar observations. In a study of 28 Japanese EFL graduate students, LoCastro found that purposefulness of language learning underpins LLS use. For example, when the students were in junior and senior high school, they were mainly interested in passing the examination and employed memorization strategies to achieve this outcome.

The discussion on recommended and non-recommended learning strategies is closely associated with the discussion on the purposefulness of those strategies. Purposefulness or intentionality is considered the most vital attribute of a learning strategy and has received consensus from researchers across various fields. As suggested by Paris, Lipson, and Wixson (1983), a strategy is intentionally selected, actively engaged in, and consciously monitored and evaluated to achieve an aim or to solve a problem. According to Gu (2005), without a purpose, a learning behaviour or course of action cannot be considered strategic. This finding has a direct implication for LLS training which should be constructed around learning purposes or learning goals to ensure the effectiveness of the target strategies.

3.3 Barriers to LLS Development

While sharing their lived experiences, the teacher and student participants specified a number of barriers to the adoption of new LLSs. Firstly, the difficulties were associated with their prolonged attachment to previously developed strategies, which interfered with the use of new strategies. As indicated by Teacher 2-F, who stated “while reading, my students usually have trouble getting the idea quickly due to their habit of understanding every word”. Although the students tended to describe their difficulties more specifically, the hindrances were also related to their habitual learning behaviours. One student, for example, described his struggle with vocabulary learning without realizing that his traditional way of learning de-contextualized words from the dictionary did not seem to satisfy his current needs.

I have problems with learning new words. I normally set a goal for learning about 30–40 new words a day. I just pick them randomly from the dictionary. But it's difficult to put them into long-term memory and put them into use as well. (Student 1-M-Y1-E)

Another student was too familiar with reading word by word so found it hard to develop the skills of scanning and skimming in reading English materials.

I was taught to scan for main ideas and skim for details. However, I do not do much scanning because my mind keeps attending to details and I end up reading everything.
(Student 7-F-Y1-N)

The prolonged attachment to previously developed strategies may present a hindrance to LLS adoption due to the potential resistance to change and the hesitation to divert away from one's learning comfort zone. This finding is confirmed by O'Malley (1987), who asserted that Asian learners tended to exhibit a high persistence of familiar strategies which accounted for their common lack of success in language learning. In fact, these learning behaviours might have been repeatedly conditioned at lower schooling levels in Vietnam, such as junior or high school, into steadfast habits.

Therefore, it is suggested that changes can be influenced not only at the tertiary level, but also at lower levels of schooling so that students have opportunities to explore and adopt a variety of strategies to language learning at an earlier stage. The wider implication of this finding is related to professional training for language teachers across levels in the current system. The teachers themselves need to have adequate confidence, trust and competence in the promotion of diverse LLSs among students before they can contribute to the translation of rhetoric into genuine practice.

Secondly, additional challenges came from the lack of investment in terms of time and effort into the adoption of certain strategies. As Teacher 9-F observed, "many of my students do not have enough patience to learn and practice English learning strategies on a regular basis." The reflection from Teacher 10-F below also highlighted this lack of regular practice in strategies, which resulted in frustration among students.

Taking notes while listening causes a lot of difficulties for my students. You know that this is a difficult skill and it requires lots of practice. But it seems that my students haven't actually mastered the note-taking skills. So instead of having a positive impact on their listening comprehension, note-taking seems to impede their comprehension by the frustration and tension that it creates. (Teacher 10-F)

In the view of some teachers, the difficulties in adopting certain strategies were the consequences of combined deterrents, including the lack of motivation and time to master the strategies.

To improve their speaking skills... students need to spend time on practicing and seeking opportunities to try... the language like attending English-focused activities. However, it seems that some of them are a bit overloaded with schoolwork and are more interested in working part-time to gain work experience than improving their English skills.
(Teacher 4-F)

The lack of time to try new strategies, especially those related to expanding opportunities for English practice and usage, was also mentioned frequently by the students. Specifically, the students showed their desire to engage themselves in input-rich language learning environments, such as an English club; however, they were partly deterred by the time barrier.

I know our English club but I have never joined before. I heard that it is good, but I haven't found the time to join... I don't like the current curriculum because we are having a heavy learning load. It takes a great deal of time away from other English learning activities. (Student 1-M-Y1-E)

There is an English club at our university, but I haven't had the chance to attend it because of my limited time and my personal circumstances. (Student 6-M-Y2-N)

Notably, the integrated strategies, which normally require extensive practice such as those in handling a conversation in English or taking notes of a speech, were reported to cause difficulties for the students. Again, this point echoed the concern of the teachers.

Yes, when I tried to talk to foreigners... I had difficulty in expressing myself. I could see that the listeners were irritated when they couldn't understand what I wanted to say. I was frustrated and upset a lot. (Student 2-F-Y2-E)

I cannot use many of the note-taking skills that I have learned because the speaker normally speaks pretty fast. I have no time to think about the structure or process the main ideas so as to take notes effectively. (Student 8-M-Y2-N)

This lack of investment in terms of time and effort could be attributed to both subjective and objective factors. On the part of the students, most of their time and attention could have been devoted to the subject content areas rather than the strategies in approaching these subjects. Particularly with the integrated strategies that require persistent practice most students will probably be discouraged by initial failure before they could actually see the outcomes of their time and practice.

The main implication for language teachers and educators is to emphasize the acquisition of LLSs as the attainment of procedural knowledge rather than declarative knowledge and to provide on-going encouragement for students to experiment with the target strategies. On the part of educational administrators and providers, it is important to build a curriculum with reasonable workload and create ample opportunities outside of the classroom for students to explore diverse learning strategies to improve their language performance. An input- and output-rich environment is crucial (Krashen, 1981), and students must be allowed adequate time to engage themselves in that environment.

The last barrier emerging from the interviews was related to psychological factors. Some students stated that they lacked confidence in some language skills and were uncertain about the appropriateness of their current strategies. However, they demonstrated hesitation in approaching their teachers for help or guidance concerning a more effective manipulation of LLSs. This hesitation, mostly stemming from shyness or self-estrangement from teachers, presented a great barrier, which are evident in the statements as follows.

I sometimes ask my teachers for help when I make new sentences with new words, but I think they don't have enough time to answer all of my questions. So, I mostly study by myself and that's why I don't have much certainty in the way I use English. (Student 1-M-Y1-E)

I have difficulty in writing academic essays, but I rarely ask my teachers for advice, because somehow I still feel a distance between myself and my teachers although they

are very supportive. I think I have been feeling the same since I started schooling.
(Student 2-F-Y2-E)

In other cases, the psychological barrier resulted from students commencing their studies with ideas and beliefs concerning what would work for them, rather than experimenting with strategies provided within the classroom.

I think rewriting words to remember their spellings does not work for me, although I never try myself. (Student 1-M-Y1-E)

I read about skimming and scanning before, but I don't think they help with my speed and comprehension in reading. I have no intention to employ these strategies. (Student 8-M-Y2-N)

This finding supports much of the literature about Asian learners, who are widely described as shy and passive language learners. Usuki (2000), for example, examined the psychological barriers to the adoption of effective LLSs by Japanese students and suggested that their pre-formed beliefs prevented them from experimenting with the negatively-labelled strategies. The impact of this distrust may inhibit interest, develop an absence of self-training, increase a lack of confidence and ultimately produce a lack of skills when using strategies.

The most negative scenario among Vietnamese students would be either avoidance or under-utilization of strategies in their regular learning practice. It is important that language teachers be aware of the psychological hindrances that could deter their students from the effective adoption of LLSs and take appropriate measure to address these issues. More communication between teachers and students would be necessary to ensure better understanding. It has been suggested by many educators that teachers should spend time listening to students and engaging in interactive dialogue with them so as to establish an emotional connection and build a positive teacher-student rapport (Cothran & Ennis, 2000; Hill & Hawk, 2000; Noddings, 1992).

3.4 Shared Characteristics of Strategy Use

A comprehensive analysis of the conversations with the students also resulted in the emergence of shared characteristics in their strategy use. These common characteristics were useful for the attempt to sketch a strategy profile of this learner group in the current context.

The first and most noticeable characteristic was that the students constructed their strategies through the interactions with teachers and peers. One student recalled being taught how to learn vocabulary by her former English teacher at junior high school and these experiences had shaped her learning strategies for most of her later learning (Student 5-F-Y4-E). The influence of teachers was clearly felt when most of the students mentioned their teachers as those who introduced and framed their current strategies. In addition, many students reported to benefit greatly in strategy instruction from their fellow students. This is illustrated by the story of Student 4.

My friends have a great impact on how I study English too. I observe what my friends do, those who are good in English, and then try to imitate them. (Student 4-F-Y1-E)

Although there are many theories that may explain this phenomenon, socio-cultural theory suggests that social interaction and cultural institutions play an important role in individuals' cognitive growth and development (Donato & McCormick, 1994). Therefore, in this context,

a student's strategic orientation to language learning is influenced by classroom-based interaction. For example, Donato and McCormick (1994) highlighted the importance of social interaction, scaffolded learning and collaboration in building effective language classrooms. It is recommended from this finding that a situated strategy development community, as suggested by Huang and Andrews (2010), be introduced as part of language learning strategy instruction or training programs.

The second feature that characterized the students' use of strategies was that their adoption of strategies was more dynamic than static. Reflecting on their employment of strategies in learning English over the years, the students reported a tendency to change strategies to suit their learning needs.

Until grade 9, I just listened to music and watched movies. Since grade 10, I started reading books and stories in English. (Student 1-M-Y1-E)

I remembered when I started learning English, I studied with books all the time, doing exercises and trying to memorize the grammar rules... Later, I was more active with the oral language. I watch movies and listen to news in English more. (Student 5-F-Y4-E)

In most cases, these changes were linked to the transitions from one schooling level to another, such as from high school to university. Noticeably, there was a similarity in the reported strategies at high school, including those characterized by a repetitive and memorizational nature. Undertaking grammar exercises, memorizing grammar rules, rewriting new words were among the highly mentioned strategies in the high school experience of the interviewed students. As one student remarked:

From grade 6 to grade 12, most of what I did was to learn grammar and vocabulary out of context... Since I entered the university, I have been focusing more on listening and speaking. I have almost stopped learning grammar and vocabulary outside the classroom. (Student 2-F-Y2-E)

In other cases, student English proficiency levels, or the various learning environments were reported to determine the changes in English leaning strategy employment among the students.

I have changed my strategies quite often, depending on different stages of my learning. (Student 3-F-Y3-E)

I have been using different strategies since I started learning English. I guess it depends on my English levels and the learning environment at school. (Student 7-F-Y1-N)

Whether their dynamicity in LLS use is triggered by changing learning environments or learning needs, the findings suggest that learning is autonomous and independent. This active responsiveness to the changing contexts and environment is a very positive finding, which again challenges much of the literature about "passive" Vietnamese language learners. Contemporary researchers such as Gao (2006) also pointed to the dynamicity of LLS selection and use among Asian students under the influence of different learning contexts. The implication for teachers and educators is to find ways to further encourage, accommodate and enforce this conscious and selective adoption of LLSs among EFL students.

The third shared characteristic was the tendency to use technology-assisted strategies for the enhancement of English learning. Their preference for learning English through TV programs and online resources was evidenced in the following comments.

Every morning I spend 10 minutes to watch the IELTS preparation course on Australia network. I revise the learning points on this program and use Google to find out more details. For grammar, I will Google it on the internet before asking the help from teachers. (Student 8-M-Y2-N)

I love watching TV programs in English. Whenever I watch movies or cartoons, I repeat the lines of the characters and learn a lot from them, such as intonation. (Student 2-F-Y2-E)

At home, I usually listen to recordings of practice tests for TOEIC, or BBC news. I also watch videos on YouTube which are about my favourite topics. (Student 3-F-Y3-E)

Some students indicated that they knew how to take full advantage of being a “netizen” to maximize the opportunities for developing their English ability. Through their experiences, Internet-based strategies were demonstrated to open up a variety of pathways to achieving their desired goals English learning. Student 5, for example, proudly shared her own Internet-based strategies.

At the moment, I am an active member of an online forum ... It is actually a fan club where we exchange information about our idols. I often translate pieces of news about my idols into English and I learn a lot from that. Besides, being a member of this forum expands my network beyond Vietnam and I have friends who are from other countries... I think this is the best way for me to learn English and use English in the most meaningful and natural manner. (Student 5-F-Y4-E)

The current technologically-linked society may be at play in the shaping of this technology-based feature. Situating this finding in the socio-cultural perspective, individuals' strategic orientations to language learning can be influenced by the socio-environmental factors such as technology advancement. The data from this study confirms the contention that strategy use is framed not only by the immediate learning contexts but also by the larger social environment. It is highly recommended that further research be directed to the exploration and promotion of these technology-driven strategies whose potential for learning enhancement could greatly benefit language learners.

4 Conclusion

Language learning strategies, particularly within the tertiary environment, have moved beyond rote learning, grammar exercises and primary and high school approaches to language development. The current strategies and processes of language learning at the tertiary level are also dependant on many factors such as individual aptitude, perseverance, hard work, and the teacher and student's positive attitudes.

The study sought to investigate and evaluate the use of LLS among Vietnamese EFL students and staff in Vietnam. What was found was the attribution of English learning success to multiple elements, which is a positive perception. This deters the myth of the absolute power of any single factor in language learning. It has major implications for the teaching profession, in that the promotion of LLSs need to go hand in hand with other important tasks, such as the

stimulation of learning interests, the strengthening of learning determination, and the encouragement of learning efforts on the part of students.

There is also a need to move forward in language learning strategies that promotes student's ability to find what works for them, to overcome or drop old strategies and be flexible in trying new and unfamiliar strategies. It is also vital for teachers to be open to other strategies that have been found to work or developed by students themselves. These may include the use of technology and personal interests that promote the desire to learn and develop language acquisition beyond the classroom. Teaching language then moves beyond learning language and associated strategies, to motivating students to learn the skills and to equip students to develop positive strategies that can be used beyond tertiary education and enhance language development as a lifelong process.

References

- Boeije, H. (2002). A purposeful approach to the constant comparative method in the analysis of qualitative interviews. *Quality and quantity*, 36(4), 391–409. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1020909529486>
- Cothran, D., & Ennis, C. (2000). Building bridges to students' engagement: Communicating respect and care for students in urban high schools. *Journal of Research and Development in Education*, 33(2), 106–117. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.1994.tb02063.x>
- Creswell, J. W. (2011). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Donato, R., & MacCormick, D. (1994). A sociocultural perspective on language learning strategies: The role of mediation. *The Modern Language Journal*, 78(4), 453–464.
- Duong, T. H. O., & Nguyen, T. H. (2006). Memorization and EFL students' strategies at university level in Vietnam. *Teaching English as a Foreign or Second Language (TESL-EJ)*, 10(2), 1–21.
- Fram, S. M. (2013). The constant comparative analysis method outside of grounded theory. *The Qualitative Report*, 18(1), 1–25.
- Gao, X. (2006). Understanding changes in Chinese students' uses of learning strategies in China and Britain: A socio-cultural re-interpretation. *System*, 34, 55–67. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2005.04.003>
- Green, J. M., & Oxford, R. L. (1995). A closer look at learning strategies, L2 proficiency, and gender *TESOL Quarterly*, 29(2), 261–297. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3587625>
- Gu, P. Y. (2005). *Learning strategies: Prototypical core and dimensions of variation*. Working paper. National Institute of Education. Centre for Research in Pedagogy and Practice. Nanyang.
- Hill, J., & Hawk, K. (2000). *Making a difference in the classroom: Effective teaching practice in low decile, multicultural schools*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Huang, J., & Andrews, S. (2010). Situated development and use of language learner strategies: voices from EFL students. *Language Learning Journal*, 38(1), 19–35. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09571730902717430>
- Jiang, X., & Smith, R. (2009). Chinese learners' strategy use in historical perspective: A cross-generational interview-based study. *System*, 37(2), 286–299. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09571730902717430>
- Krashen, S. (1981). *Second language acquisition and second language learning*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Lantolf, J., & Appel, G. (1994). *Vygotskian approaches to second language research*. New Jersey: Ablex Publishing.
- Lantolf, J. P. (2000). Introducing sociocultural theory. In J. P. Lantolf (Ed.), *Sociocultural theory and second language learning* (pp. 1–26). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lantolf, J. P., Thorne, S. L., & Poehner, M. E. (2015). Sociocultural theory and second language development. In B. VanPatten & J. Williams (Eds.), *Theories in second language acquisition: An introduction* (2nd ed., pp. 207–226). New York: Routledge.
- Locastro, V. (1994). Learning strategies and learning environments. *TESOL Quarterly*, 28(2), 409–414. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3587445>
- Naiman, M., Froehlich, M., Stern, H., & Todesco, A. (1978). *The good language learner*. Toronto: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.
- Noddings, N. (1992). Caring: A feminist perspective. In K. Strike & P. Ternasky (Eds.), *Ethics for professionals in education: Perspectives for preparation and practice* (pp. 43–53). New York: New York Teachers' College Press.

- O'Malley, J. M. (1987). The effects of training in the use of learning strategies on learning English as a second language. In A. Wenden & J. Rubin (Eds.), *Learner strategies in language learning* (pp. 133–143). Cambridge: Prentice-Hall.
- Paris, S. G., Lipson, M. J., & Wixson, K. K. (1983). Becoming a strategic reader. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 8(3), 293–316.
[https://doi.org/10.1016/0361-476X\(83\)90018-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/0361-476X(83)90018-8)
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications.
- Richardson, V. (1996). The role of attitudes and beliefs in learning to teach. In J. Sikula (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teacher education* (2nd ed., pp. 102–119). New York: Macmillan.
- Rokeach, M. (1968). *Beliefs, attitudes, and values*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Rubin, J. (1975). What the “good language learner” can teach us? *TESOL Quarterly*, 9, 41–51.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/3586011>
- Rubin, J., & Thompson, I. (1982). *How to be a more successful language learner*. Boston, Massachusetts: Heinle & Heinle Publishers.
- Scarcella, R. C., & Oxford, R. L. (1992). *The tapestry of language learning: The individual in the communicative classroom*. Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle.
- Stern, H. H. (1975). What can we learn from the good language learner? *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 31, 304–318.
- Tesch, R. (1990). *Qualitative research: Analysis types and software*. London: Falmer Press.
- Usuki, M. (2000). A new understanding of Japanese students' views on classroom learning. *Independence*, 27, 2–6.
- Zhang, D., & Goh, C. (2006). Strategy knowledge and perceived strategy use: Singaporean students' awareness of listening and speaking strategies. *Language Awareness*, 15(3), 199–119.

Corresponding author: Hoang Nguyen

Email: hoang.nguyen@utas.edu.au

Appendix 1

Questions for Students

1. What are your views about the role of strategies in English learning?
2. Which of the following statements do you agree with more? Why?
 - a. Teachers have to teach students different learning strategies.
 - b. Students have to seek and experiment with different learning strategies by themselves.
3. Whenever you successfully complete a task for goal in learning English, what factors do you think are most likely to determine your achievements?
4. Have you ever received instructions/guidance from your teacher(s) on English learning strategies? If yes, can you provide more information on this matter?
5. How necessary is strategy instruction to you? Would you like to have strategy instruction imbedded or separated from your normal English course?
6. Please describe a situation when you had difficulties in adopting a new learning strategy.
7. Please indicate some strategies, if any, that you have stopped using because they are not effective.
8. Which of the following statements best describe you as a language learning? Please provide more information on this matter.
 - a. I have been using the same strategies since I started learning English
 - b. I have used different strategies as my English gets better.

Questions for Staff

1. What are your views about the role of strategies in English learning?
2. Which learning strategies do you think are most effective for the subject/course (Writing, Reading, or Speaking, etc.) that you mainly teach? In your view, what difficulties, if any, do students have in developing/adopting those learning strategies?
3. Please share with us your method(s) in teaching LLSs to your students. Could you indicate the resources or references for your instruction (personal experience, books, website, etc.)?
4. In your opinion, should there be a training course on English learning strategies at the University? Why or why not?
5. Do you have any suggestions on what teachers and the University should do to help students learn English better?
6. Is there anything else you would like to share with us about English learning strategies and the current learning/teaching environment?

Using Learners' First Language in EFL Classrooms

Eman Alshehri, King Abdulaziz University, Saudi Arabia

Abstract

This study explores the attitudes of EFL teachers towards using learners' first language (L1) in their classes. It also considers the frequency and functions of using L1 in EFL classes. A mixed-methods study using questionnaires and follow-up interviews was conducted to collect data from EFL teachers of the preparatory year at a state university in Saudi Arabia. Questionnaires were collected from 104 EFL teachers from countries such as the USA, India, and Pakistan. In addition, semi-structured interviews were carried out with five teachers to gain an in-depth understanding of their attitudes towards using L1 in EFL classes. The findings provide insight into teachers' attitudes towards the use of L1. They also show that the EFL teachers use L1 to some extent to serve certain pedagogical functions, such as explaining vocabulary.

Keywords: L1 use, EFL classrooms, teaching English

1 Introduction

Using learners' first language (L1) is widely avoided in English as a foreign language (EFL) classes (Cook, 2001; Littlewood & Yu, 2011). Since the end of the 18th century, a number of well-known English teaching methods have adopted a monolingual approach to language teaching, such as the direct method, audiolingualism, communicative language teaching, and task-based language teaching (Howatt, 1984). The monolingual approach discourages use of L1 through one of three approaches: banning the use of L1 in the classroom, minimizing the use of L1 in the classroom, or maximizing use of the target language (L2) in the classroom (Cook, 2001).

The monolingual approach is supported by Krashen's (1981) theory of second language learning, in which it is argued that when learning foreign languages, people follow basically the same route as they do when they acquire their mother tongue, and hence use of the mother tongue in the learning process should be minimized. Brown (1994) believes that language acquisition is a subconscious activity that can only be achieved via interaction in the L2. Another argument for maximizing L2 use is that successful language acquisition depends on keeping the L2 separate from the L1 because languages form distinct systems (Lado, 1957). The rationale for this is based on transfer theories such as contrastive analysis, whereby various language systems cause negative transfers and impede L2 acquisition (Lado, 1957).

Until recently, the monolingual approach was rarely challenged. This may have been due to several reasons. Most EFL classes used to include students who did not share a single L1, and the teacher did not speak the students' language (Atkinson, 1993). However, there is now a wide range of classes in which this is not the case, and where students and teachers share the same L1. This leads monolingual orthodoxy to lose its appeal, and researchers have begun to find fault with L2-only theories, particularly when the L1 of the students (and sometimes the teacher) is shared (Medgyes, 1994; Auerbach, 1993). In these situations, Medgyes (1994) considers this orthodoxy to be 'untenable on any grounds, be they psychological, linguistic or pedagogical' (p.66), and Auerbach (1993) highlights that there could be positive reasons for using L1 in the classroom for certain purposes.

Many researchers have investigated contexts in which L1 could be used as an aid to L2 teaching (Atkinson, 1993; Aurebach, 1993), including examining the areas in which L1 can be used in a supporting role when learning L2. Classroom management (including discipline, organizing the class and task setting) is one such area; others include translation and checking meaning, understanding grammatical points, language analysis, and code switching (Atkinson, 1993; Aurebach, 1993). Some studies, aside from appearing to demonstrate that L1 use can actually assist L2 learning, have shown that L1 use can also help students in a sociocultural respect. It has been observed that L1 use can create a more cohesive and relaxed classroom environment in which students share language and cultural references with the teacher, which also clearly impacts learning. Bhooth, Azman, and Ismail (2014) highlight that using the L1 during collaborative tasks enhances learners' language proficiency as they move through the zone of proximal development. Copland and Neokleous (2011) also note that L1 use is valuable in one-to-one interaction with the teacher, while Nation (1990) suggests that refusing to allow students to use their shared L1 negatively impacts on them as it makes them feel that their own language is somehow inferior to the L2.

Although L1 use is discouraged in mainstream English language teaching (ELT) methods, a number of studies show that EFL teachers do, in fact, use L1 in the classroom (Cook, 2001;

Hall & Cook, 2013). Nunan and Lamb (1996) state that the avoidance of learner L1 is practically impossible, especially with monolingual students and students with low-level English language proficiency. In fact, according to Cook (2001), teachers who have at least some knowledge of their students' shared mother tongue tend to use L1 in their classroom. However, when EFL teachers use L1, they often experience feelings of guilt (Copland & Neokleous, 2011). At the same time, it has been suggested that EFL teachers find using L1 practical in L2 teaching (Macaro, 2001), and feel that excluding L1 for "exclusion's sake" could hinder students' learning (e.g., Cook, 2001). Studies have revealed that L1 exclusion is unnecessary; that its use can actually promote learning, providing it is used in the correct way; and that instructors actually do use L1 in their classroom (Copland & Neokleous, 2011; Hall & Cook, 2013).

Some studies examine EFL teachers' use of learners' L1 and teachers' attitudes towards the use of L1 (Hall & Cook, 2013; McMillan & Rivers, 2011). However, few studies investigate teachers' attitudes towards L1 use in relation to the practical functions of this in the classroom in the context of a Saudi University, in particular in the preparatory year, with a range of native and non-native EFL teachers. A study in such context might provide empirical results about the role of L1 in EFL classrooms. It can also add to our understanding of the extent of using L1 by EFL teachers and students and the attitudes of practising teachers towards L1 use. Therefore, the current study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. How frequently do EFL teachers use learners' L1?
2. How frequently do students use their L1 in the EFL classroom?
3. What are teachers' attitudes towards the use of L1?

2 Methodology

2.1 Participants

The participants in this study comprised 104 female teachers, who each answered a questionnaire. As shown in Figure 1, the EFL teachers participating in this study were of a number of different nationalities, with the largest group (about 40%) comprising Saudis. The second highest percentage (21.90%) were South Asian teachers from India, Pakistan, or Bangladesh. About 10% of teachers were from other Arabic countries (Egypt, Tunis, Jordan, Morocco) or the USA. There were also a number of teachers from the UK, South-East Asia, Canada, Australia, and South Africa, and one teacher from Slovakia.

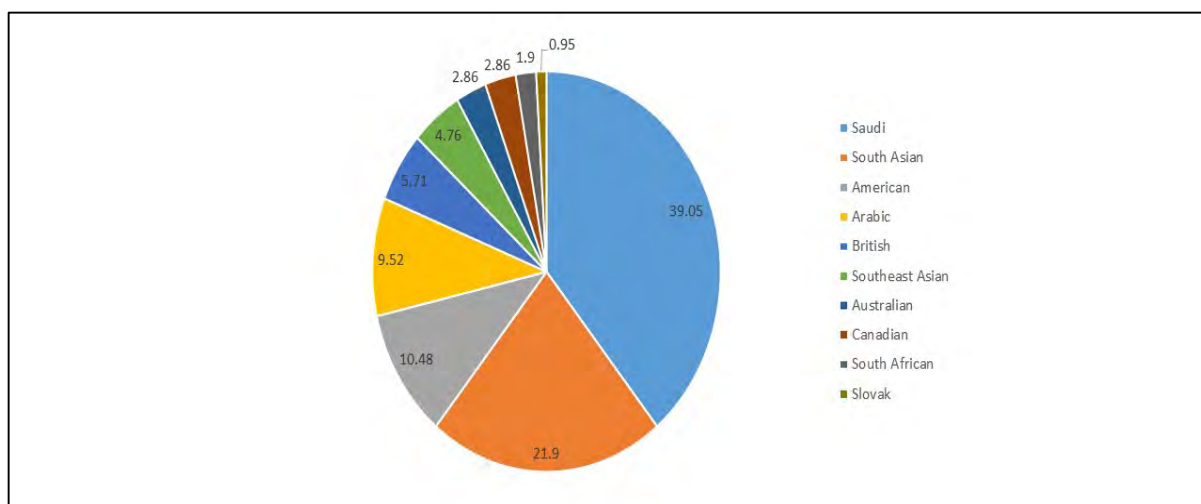


Figure 1: Teacher nationalities (%)

Almost 50% of the EFL teachers were native Arabic speakers, while about 50% were not, as shown in Figure 2.

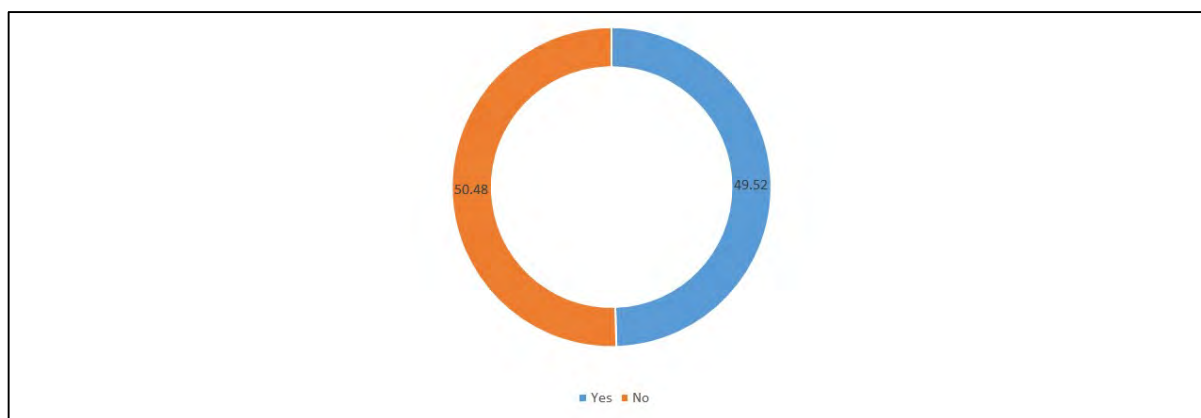


Figure 2: Results in answer to the question "Is Arabic your first language?" (%)

Interviews were also conducted with five of these teachers. The interviewees were chosen to represent a broad range of experience, nationalities, and Arabic language ability. The profile of the interviewees is provided in Table 1.

Code	Years of Experience	Nationality	Level of Spoken Arabic Ability
A	5–9	Australian	Elementary
B	10–14	Pakistani	Elementary
C	25+	Saudi	Native
D	20–24	British	N/A
E	5–9	Saudi	Native

Table 1: Profile of interviewees

The majority of teachers who participated in the study possessed a language-related postgraduate diploma, master's degree, or PhD. They were teaching university-level students,

as the research was conducted at a state university in Saudi Arabia. The sample comprised both native and non-native EFL teachers of the preparatory year, which is the first year of university. One of the main aims of the preparatory year is to improve the English level of students. In order to do this, an intensive general English language course of 18 hours per week is provided. The students' level in English when starting the preparatory year varies, but if they are a beginner at the start of the preparatory year they should reach upper-intermediate level by the end of the year.

2.2 Data Collection Procedures

This study adopted a mixed-methods design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to allow for a breadth of information to be obtained and to explore the topic in depth. The 104 participants completed a survey (adopted from Hall & Cook, 2013) online during the spring of 2016. The questionnaire items were designed carefully and it was administered to a large and global sample of English language teachers (Hall & Cook, 2013). To ensure the content reliability and validity of the questionnaire, it was piloted to five English teachers to check the wording and the clarity of its items. After piloting and based on the participants' feedback, some questionnaire items were modified to facilitate clearer understanding, or deleted as they were not related to the context of the study.

The final version of the questionnaire included seven multi-item Likert scale questions, including open questions that gave the participants the opportunity to add further comments, and nine short background questions. Finally, the participants were asked to provide their contact details if they were willing to participate in the follow-up interviews. The average time taken to complete the questionnaire in the pilot study was between 15 and 20 minutes.

The questionnaire investigated teachers' attitudes towards L1 use in the professional context; thus, it should be noted that the data represents reported, rather than actual, L1 use practices. The questionnaire covered attitudes towards the teachers' L1 use in ELT, an evaluation of the arguments for and against this, and the teachers' perceptions of general attitudes towards using L1 in ELT. It also asked about the extent to which the teachers used the learners' L1 in their class and teaching, and for what purposes.

With respect to the follow-up interviews, the main aim was to develop an in-depth understanding of participants' practices of and attitudes towards use of L1 in the EFL classroom. Interview guidelines were developed to address the research questions pertaining to the frequency of using L1, and teachers' attitudes towards using L1 in their teaching. The interviews were semi-structured, individual, recorded, conducted in English, and lasted between 10 and 15 minutes.

Signed informed consent forms were obtained from participants prior to their completion of the questionnaires, and conducting the interviews.

2.3 Data Analysis

To answer the three research questions, the questionnaires were analysed via SPSS 20 software and descriptive statistics were calculated for all questions. The interview data was transcribed and the anonymity of the participants was ensured by coding the interviews with alphabetical letters. The interview transcripts were analysed thematically, because thematic analysis describes the "implicit and explicit ideas within the data" (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2011,

p.10). The emergent themes relate to the research questions which examine the frequency of using learners' L1 by EFL teachers, the frequency of using L1 by students in EFL classrooms, and teachers' attitudes towards the use of L1. Excel was used to analyse the qualitative data because it has useful features and commands which help in coding and analysing the interview data such as sorting the data (Hahn, 2008). Hahn's (2008) book about using MS Word and Excel to analyse qualitative data was used as a guide throughout the analysis process.

3 Results

In this section, the quantitative and qualitative results for each research question will be provided.

3.1 RQ1: How frequently do EFL teachers use learners' L1?

According to the questionnaire results presented in Figure 3, more than 50% of teachers reported that they never used Arabic in assessing their students, giving feedback, correcting spoken errors, and giving instructions. When examining the results of ALWAYS and OFTEN options, it appears that the teachers did not tend to use L1 much in their EFL classroom for any of the examined functions. However, for the SOMETIMES option, about 30% of teachers reported that they sometimes used Arabic to explain vocabulary, develop rapport and a good classroom atmosphere, and explain meanings.

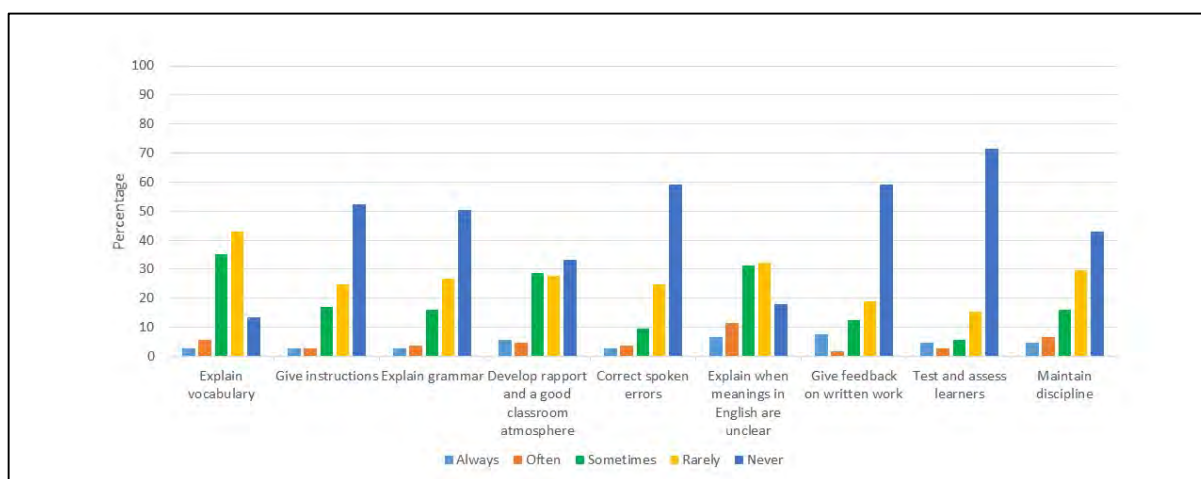


Figure 3: Frequency of L1 use by EFL teachers

During the interviews, the teachers talked about the functions of using L1 in the classroom and stated that they used L1 when needed. The main area that they reported using it in was explaining vocabulary, in particular adjectives and abstract words that cannot be drawn on the board or shown in a picture to explain their meanings. All the teachers said they needed to use L1 for this function, which supports the results from the questionnaire as the top function for L1 use was stated as explaining vocabulary. Teacher A said "...mostly for translating words... because in module 3 and 4 especially this module they [students] are very weak".

Most teachers also reported that they used L1 directly, by first using the L2 and then translating what they had said into Arabic. One of the teachers was unable to speak Arabic and so stated

that she tended to ask one of her students to translate. Teacher D, who does not speak Arabic, stated:

...personally I don't use Arabic but I seek help from my students... first I will ask the student in general can you repeat what I say... ..then I ask her to translate... especially for the vocabulary. (Teacher D)

Another teacher was against using L1 (she is a native Arabic speaker), and reported that she never used Arabic, but that she did encourage her students to use online bilingual dictionaries to translate vocabulary they did not understand. She reported:

...if they are asking about simple word...usually I tell them to use their phone to use google translation ...Arabic/English translation... I do not use Arabic in the class... (Teacher C)

The teachers also spoke about their reasons for their using L1 in their classes. All of them said that they needed to use it for beginner students who cannot understand explanations in English. Teacher B said:

...sometimes for the vocabulary, I have to explain something and they are unable to understand ... I try my best to [help] them to comprehend in L2 ... but the thing is sometimes we feel the need ... so maybe there is one student in the class ... I say what do you call it in Arabic and all of a sudden she said something in Arabic and they get the idea ...[the students will realize] OK she is talking about this thing. (Teacher B)

Besides using L1 for beginner students, most of the teachers interviewed mentioned the following three points as reasons for using L1: (1) helping them to develop a good relationship with their students; (2) enabling students to feel close to them by speaking one or two words in Arabic, which helped to create a pleasant classroom atmosphere; and (3) as pointed out by three of the teachers, L1 is used as a resource to teach English when needed. Teacher E stated:

...students feel detached when you talk English all the time ... or when they cannot understand and you insist on speaking in English and you do not even try to help them ... I have read also about the positive effect for their learning if you use it [L1] wisely. (Teacher E)

3.2 RQ2: How frequently do students use their L1 in the EFL classroom?

In the questionnaire, participants were asked to indicate the frequency with which L1 was used by their students. As Figure 4 shows, the survey responses suggested that students tended to use their L1 for the functions presented to teachers in the questionnaire.

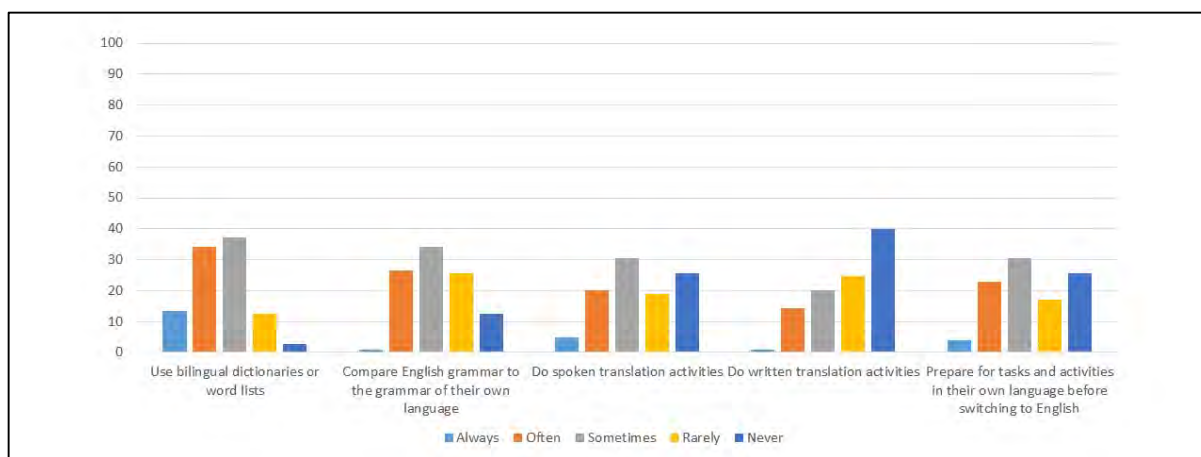


Figure 4: Frequency of L1 use by learners

The teachers reported that the majority of their students used L1 to some extent in the classroom, with the top function being for translating vocabulary using dictionaries. It was also apparent that a large percentage of students used L1 for comparing English grammar to Arabic grammar, and also to prepare for certain tasks. During the interviews, the teachers confirmed the results of the questionnaire by reiterating that L1 was used to check the meaning of a word in the dictionary and to discuss tasks (for example, speaking or writing), whereby in pairs or groups the students used L1 to seek clarification from their peers. Teacher A gave an example of this: "...if I tell them do interviews ... they will sit down and discuss it in Arabic ... and write it in English but they will discuss it in Arabic."

3.3 RQ3: What are teachers' attitudes towards the use of L1?

The third research question relates to teachers' attitudes towards using L1. To examine these attitudes, the questionnaire included items that examined five aspects: (1) teachers' general attitudes towards L1 use; (2) teachers' evaluations of the arguments supporting L1 use; (3) teachers' evaluations of the arguments against L1 use; (4) teachers' opinions about which groups of learners' L1 use is appropriate; and (5) teachers' perceptions of ELT training in relation to L1 use. In Figures 5–9, the blue coding relates to the levels of agreement (slightly agree, agree, and strongly agree), which have been collapsed to represent an overall view of agreement. The orange sections relate to the levels of disagreement (slightly disagree, disagree, and strongly disagree; also condensed).

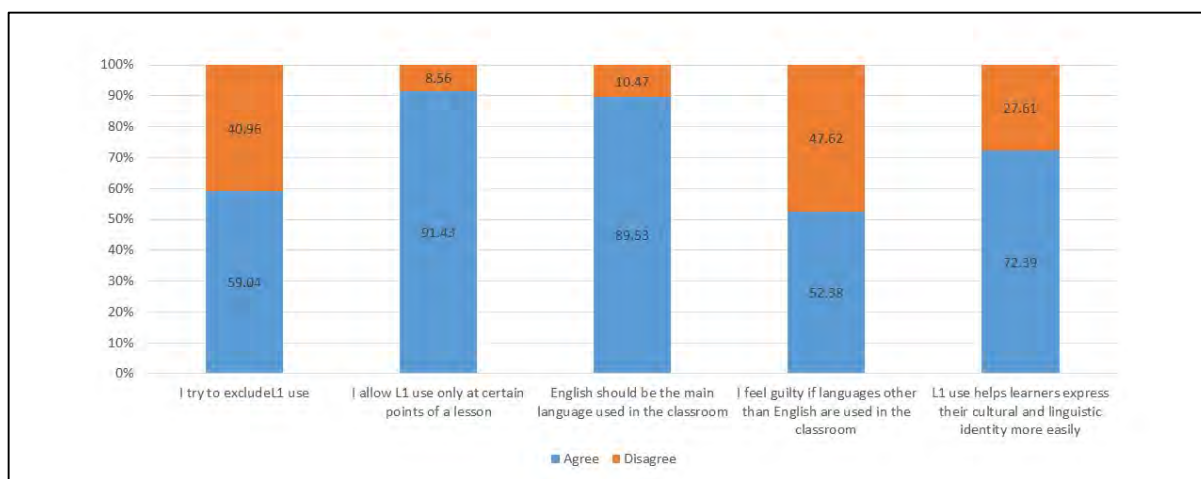


Figure 5: EFL teachers' general views of L1 use in classroom

Figure 5 represents the teachers' general attitudes towards L1 use. It shows that the majority of teachers (about 90%) allowed L1 use at certain points of the lesson, while at the same time about 90% thought that English should be the main language used in class. In addition, 52.38% of the teachers reported feeling guilty when using L1 in the EFL classroom. Although almost 70% of teachers believed that L1 helps their students to express their cultural and linguistic identity, 60% supported excluding L1 use in the classroom. Figure 6 shows the teachers' evaluations of arguments supporting the use of L1.

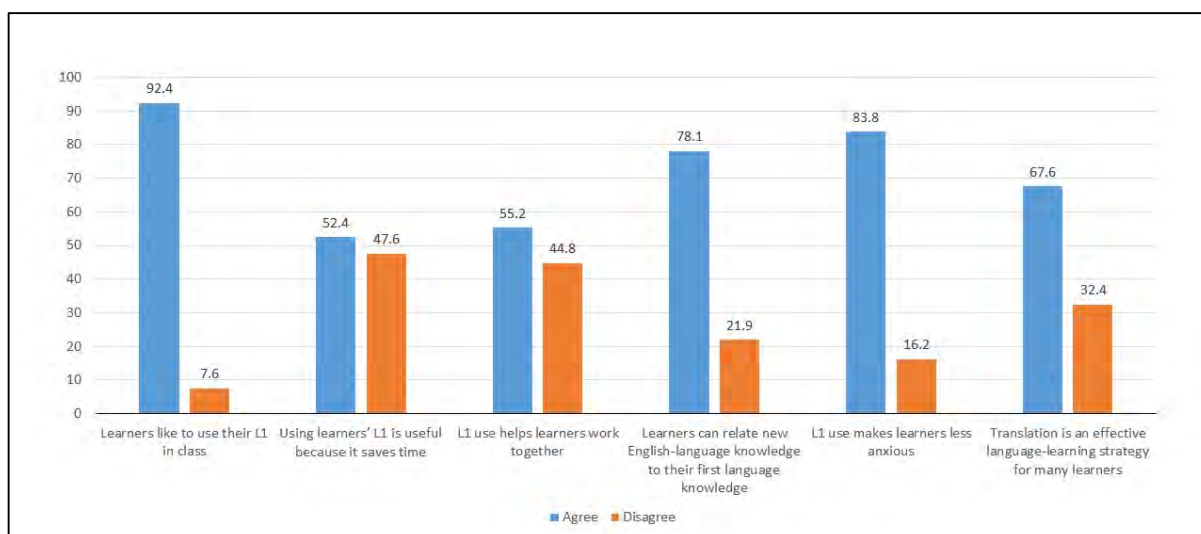


Figure 6: Teachers' evaluations of arguments supporting L1 use

The data presented in Figure 6 shows that most teachers are in agreement with three points: (1) learners like using their L1 (which has the highest percentage at 92%), (2) L1 use reduces students' anxiety levels (83.8%), which are both emotional responses, and (3) students can relate new L2 knowledge to their existing L1 knowledge, such as with grammar, and make connections between the two – which relates to cognitive skill. The highest level of disagreement was found for the second point, which pertains to using L1 to save time. It seems that teachers were more in agreement with psychological and cognitive reasons for using L1 than with practical reasons for its use, such as saving time.

Four of the teachers interviewed highlighted a need to use L1 at certain points during class. One teacher referred to L1 use as a natural occurrence amongst speakers with the same mother tongue. She said:

...we can't be against using L1, it's natural ... even if I meet someone who speaks Urdu ... all of the sudden ... although I am working in such an environment where we use English ... all of the sudden we also switch from L2 to L1 ... it's natural. (Teacher B)

Teacher A stated that L1 is useful for “vocabulary and single words”.

Figure 7 shows the teachers' evaluations of arguments against L1 use.

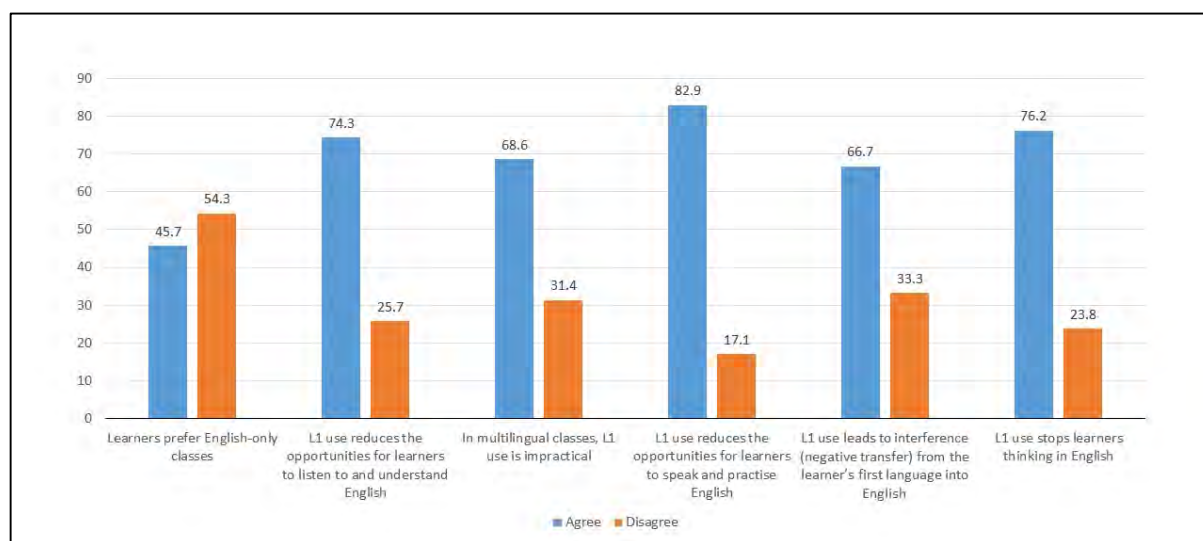


Figure 7: Teachers' evaluations of arguments against L1 use

It can be seen from Figure 7 that the majority of teachers (more than 74%) believed that using L1 reduces students' chances to practise the L2 skills of speaking and listening, which may have a negative impact on whether they think in English. The highest disagreement level shown here was for the first point, which relates to learners' preference to use L2 only in their classroom; 54.3% of teachers disagreed with this.

During the interviews, one teacher stated being against L1 use based on her belief that using English only is better for the learning outcomes of her students. She said: “Actually I don't tell them I am Saudi and I speak Arabic ... for their own benefit I am doing this ... we want them to learn the language ... they are here to learn English” (Teacher C).

Another aspect that was examined was teachers' attitudes towards which groups of students' L1 use is appropriate, the results of which are presented in Figure 8. As with previous figures in this section, the results have been grouped into two viewpoints: agree and disagree.

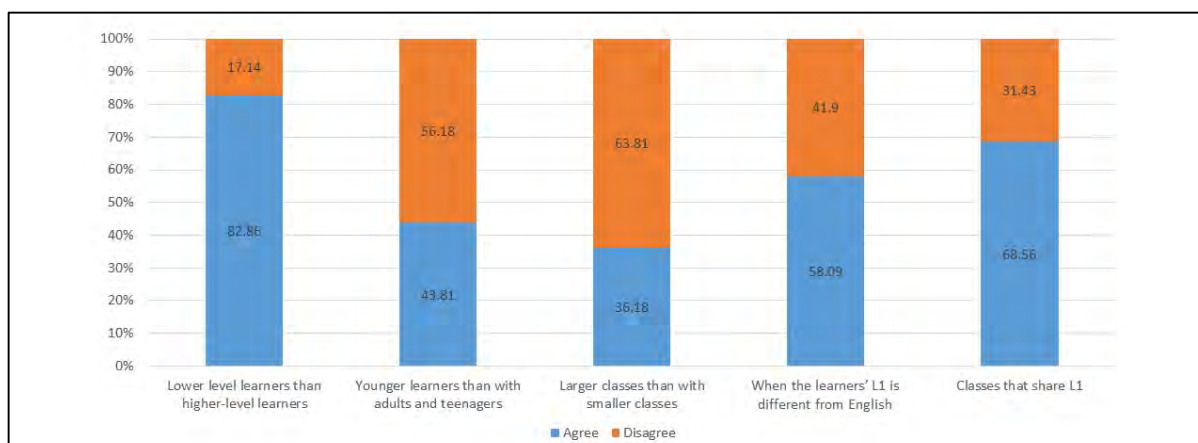


Figure 8: The appropriateness of using L1

Figure 8 shows that the highest percentage of agreement (over 80%) was with the idea that beginners benefit more from the use of L1. Around 60% of teachers believed that L1 use is appropriate in classes that share the same mother tongue. Fewer teachers, about 36%, thought that L1 should be used with larger classes, but not smaller ones.

The last aspect with respect to teacher attitudes pertains to their views of ELT training in relation to L1 use. This includes items related to whether ELT training encourages or discourages L1 use, and whether there is a discussion of L1 use in ELT research.

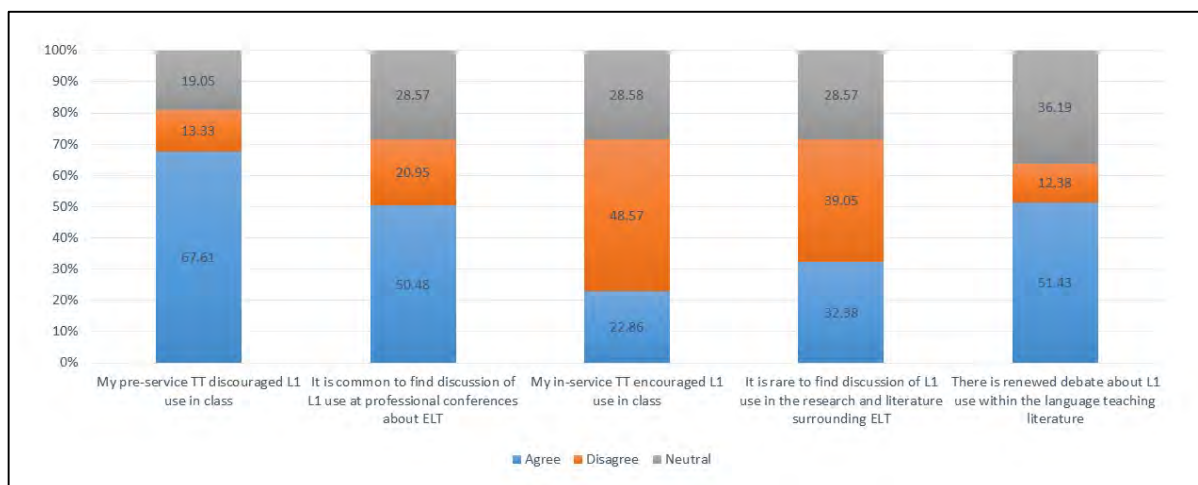


Figure 9: Teachers' perceptions of ELT training in relation to L1 use (TT = teacher training)

As shown in Figure 9, about 50% of participants disagreed with the item about L1 use being encouraged in their in-service teacher training (TT); in fact, 67% agreed that their pre-service TT discouraged L1 use. Around half of the teachers, however, were aware that there is current discussion about L1 use in ELT research and at ELT conferences.

During the interviews, four of the five teachers conveyed that their TT very much discouraged the use of L1 in the classroom. One teacher stated "I was always against it before because we were always told no Arabic in class" Teacher B, but went on to say that she attended a Cambridge course recently where it was suggested that L1 use is fine where the class shares

the same L1. Some interviewees said that they would have liked to see TT discussing L1 use and the ways in which it can be used, as they did use L1 to perform certain functions.

4 Discussion

Within the context of this study, most of the EFL teachers revealed that they allowed the use of L1 to some extent in their classroom. L1 is mainly used for explaining vocabulary, clarifying unclear meaning and building a good relationship with students. Teachers showed their belief that, when used appropriately, L1 use can enhance L2 learning. This mirrors the findings of previous research in other contexts (Hall & Cook, 2013; McMillan & Rivers, 2011), which has found that English teachers do use L1 in the classroom to perform a number of functions. Hall and Cook (2013) found that most of the participants in their study reported using L1 to explain vocabulary, grammar, and unclear meanings. They also indicated a role of L1 in developing rapport. McMillan and Rivers (2011) pointed to teachers' belief that the use of L1 in a selective way could enhance L2 learning.

In the present study, the majority of students used L1 to some extent in the classroom. As reported by teachers, they mainly used L1 for translating vocabulary using dictionaries, for comparing English grammar to Arabic grammar, and to prepare for certain tasks. The finding of this study is aligned with previous studies (Anton and DiCamilla, 1998; Centeno-Cortés and Jiménez Jiménez, 2004; Hall & Cook, 2013). They all reported the use of L1 for translating new words, preparing for tasks, and to scaffold L2 communication in language learning situations. Furthermore, the current study findings indicated that the two groups of students who can most appropriately use L1 are lower-level English language learners and learners who share the same L1. In fact, banning L1 use was found practically impossible with these two groups (Nunan and Lamb, 1996).

The teachers, in this study, also believed that English should be the main language used in EFL classrooms, showing their awareness of the benefits of maximizing the use of L2 and providing models of real language use of L2. This result supports the finding of Hall and Cook's study (2013), they find that, in general, teachers agree that the use of English should be maximised, but they also indicate learners' L1 can be used in classrooms to some extent. However, Hall and Cook (2013) refer to the need to study the appropriate amount of L1 use in classrooms.

The findings also showed teachers' belief that most of their teacher training has not encouraged L1 use. Relevant teacher training should introduce the benefits of L1 and a framework clarifying the functions of using L1. This might help teachers adapt L1 use to their context in a principled manner, and free them from the sense of guilt reported in the findings of this study and previous research (Copland & Neokleous, 2011; Littlewood & Yu, 2011).

5 Conclusion

This research examined the use of L1 by EFL teachers and their attitudes towards L1 use in the context of higher education. It also investigated the use of L1 by students as reported by their teachers. The findings reveal that teachers believe that English should be the main language used in the classroom. The results also show that teachers use L1 for some functions in EFL classes, such as explaining vocabulary and developing rapport with students. Teachers also report that the majority of their students use L1 mainly for translating new vocabulary and preparing for tasks. In addition, teachers note that teacher-training generally does not encourage the use of L1.

The study findings suggest some implications for EFL teachers, ELT research and training. EFL teachers should feel free to use learners' L1 to serve learning functions. That is not to say that they should endorse unlimited use of L1. As for ELT training and research, there appears to be a need to introduce a framework that clearly identifies both how and when to use L1. Such a framework could serve several pedagogical functions, and make the use of L1 more appropriate by outlining where L1 can be used effectively. ELT training should raise teachers' awareness of the practical benefits of using L1. This might help to free teachers from feeling guilty when a language other than English is used in the classrooms.

References

- Anton, M., & Dicamilla, F. J. (1998). Socio-cognitive functions of L1 collaborative interaction in the L2 classroom. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 54 (3), 314–342. <https://doi.org/10.3138/cmlr.54.3.314>
- Atkinson, D. (1993). *Teaching monolingual classes: Using L1 in the classroom*. Harlow: Longman Group Ltd.
- Auerbach, E. (1993). Reexamining English Only in the ESL Classroom. *TESOL Quarterly*, 27 (1), 9–32. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3586949>
- Blooth, A., Azman, H., & Ismail, K. (2014). The role of the L1 as a scaffolding tool in the EFL reading classroom. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 118, 76–84. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.02.011>
- Brown, H. D. (1994). *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall Regents.
- Centeno-Cortés, B., & Jiménez Jiménez, A. (2004). Problem-solving tasks in a foreign language: The importance of the L1 in private verbal thinking. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 14, 7–35. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1473-4192.2004.00052.x>
- Cook, V. (2001). Using the first language in the classroom. *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, 57 (3), 402–423. <https://doi.org/10.3138/cmlr.57.3.402>
- Copland, F., & Neokleous, G. (2011). L1 to teach L2: Complexities and contradictions. *ELT Journal*, 65 (3), 270–280. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccq047>
- Guest, G., MacQueen, K. M., & Namey, E. E. (2011). *Applied thematic analysis*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.
- Hahn, C. (2008). *Doing qualitative research using your computer: A practical guide*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9780857024411>
- Hall, G., & Cook, G. (2013). Own-language use in ELT: exploring global practices and attitudes. *ELT Research Paper*, British Council, London.
- Howatt, A. (1984). *A history of English language teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/38.4.279>
- Krashen, S. (1982). *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Pergamon.
- Lado, R. (1957). *Linguistics across cultures*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Littlewood, W., & Yu, B. (2011). First language and target language in the foreign language classroom. *Language Teaching*, 44, 64–77. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444809990310>
- Macaro, E. (2001). Analysing student teachers' code switching in foreign language classrooms. *Modern Language Journal*, 85, 531–548. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0026-7902.00124>
- McMillan, B., & Rivers, D. (2011). The practice of policy: Teacher attitudes toward “English-only”. *System*, 39 (2), 251–263. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2011.04.011>
- Medgyes, P. (1994). *The non-native teacher*. London: Macmillan Publishers Ltd.
- Nation, I. S. P. (1990). *Teaching and learning vocabulary*. New York: Newbury House.
- Nunan, D., & Lamb, C. (1996). *The self-directed teacher*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Corresponding author: Eman Alshehri

Email: ealshehri@kau.edu.sa

Breadth of Productive Vocabulary Knowledge of Pre-Service Teachers: Basis for the Proposed Intervention Strategies in Vocabulary Enhancement

Cecilia L. Calub & Francelle L. Calub
Tarlac State University, Philippines

Abstract

This research sought to determine the level of productive vocabulary knowledge of the students grouped according to type of school and curriculum year level; performance of the students in the vocabulary test categorized according to frequency levels; their breadth of productive vocabulary knowledge related to type of school enrolled in, curriculum year level, and exposure to information media; and the intervention strategies that may be proposed to enhance students' productive vocabulary knowledge. The Vocabulary Level Test (VLT) designed by Nation (1990) and widely used as a second language diagnostic test in New Zealand and other English-speaking countries, was adopted and used as a tool to measure selected pre-service teachers' breadth or size of productive vocabulary knowledge against word-frequency lists. The subjects were the pre-service teachers enrolled in state and private colleges. Only the freshmen and seniors taking up Bachelor in Elementary Education and Bachelor in Secondary Education were chosen to participate in the study. Results of the investigation suggest that: (1) Pre-service teachers in both public and private schools still lack the productive vocabulary knowledge in English to make them proficient and effective speakers and writers; (2) Students from state colleges have wider vocabulary knowledge than those from the private colleges. However, the breadth of their vocabulary knowledge is not sufficient to make them effective user of the language; (3) Longer exposure to the English language in the school helps increase vocabulary size; and (4) Exposure to information media helps widens breadth of productive vocabulary. It was recommended that: (1) Productive Vocabulary Levels Test by Nation (1990) should be used, then, in all tertiary institutions as an additional quantitative measure for students' vocabulary size; (2) Students should be provided adequate access to the computer/internet, cable network, English reading materials, and television in the school; and 3) Teaching time allotted for vocabulary development in all classes where English is used as the medium of instruction should be lengthened.

Keywords: productive vocabulary, vocabulary level test, word frequency levels, 2,000–3,000 WLs, 5,000 WL, University Word Level (UWL), 10,000 WL

Introduction

A principle underlying this study is that vocabulary provides the “enabling knowledge” required to be successful in other areas of language proficiency (Laufer and Nation, 1999). Indeed, words are the primary carriers of meaning (Vermeer, 2001), and there is growing evidence that the more extensive one’s vocabulary is, the higher their language proficiency will be. The size of a student’s vocabulary has been found to correlate closely with reading comprehension (Beglar, 1999; Qian, 1999) as well as with writing ability (Beglar, 1999; Laufer, 1998; Laufer and Nation, 1995).

Vocabulary testing has also been found to be a useful tool in diagnostic or placement exams. Tests of vocabulary size can discriminate between groups of learners (Meara, 2002) and aid in admissions (Laufer, 2002), as well as help in placing students into appropriate institutional placement levels within a program (Laufer and Nation, 1999; Schmitt, 1994). If used for diagnostic purposes, vocabulary size tests can allow teachers to identify and remedy deficiencies in their students’ vocabularies (Schmitt, 1994).

The importance of vocabulary in language acquisition goes uncontested. Vocabulary is indispensable for successful communication in any language. However, the key role vocabulary plays in language learning has not always been reflected in the amount of attention that has been given to it by language teachers and researchers in applied linguistics.

Vocabulary knowledge is an important component of linguistic competence, which, together with discourse competence, socio-cultural competence, and strategic competence, forms the four-fold framework of communicative proficiency proposed by Canale and Swain (1980) as cited by Bardaci (2016). Though vocabulary knowledge does not guarantee high communicative proficiency, it fulfils one of the prerequisites for language use, which eventually leads to communicative proficiency. Vocabulary knowledge enables language use, language use enables the increase of vocabulary knowledge, knowledge of the world enables the increase of vocabulary knowledge and language use and so on. Moreover, vocabulary size is a reflection of how educated, intelligent, or well read a person is. A large vocabulary size is seen as being something valuable. Meara (2002) states that:

All other things being equal, learners with big vocabularies are more proficient in a wide range of language skills than learners with smaller vocabularies, and there is some evidence to support the view that vocabulary skills make a significant contribution to almost all aspects of L2 proficiency (p. 37).

Measurement of vocabulary size has become a serious methodological problem. Questions such as: “What should be counted as a word?”, “How can we draw a sample of words from a dictionary to make a vocabulary test?” and “How do we test to see if a word is known or not?” posed as matters of concern. Failure to deal adequately with these questions has resulted in several studies of vocabulary size which give very misleading results.

Corpus research, online text databases, and lexical studies indicate that some words are more frequent than others. Nation (2001) noted that the 2000 most frequent word families of English make up 79.7% of the individual words in any English text, the 3000 most frequent word families represent 84%, the 4,000 most frequent word families make up about 86.7%, and the 5000 most frequent word families cover 88.6%. Vocabulary size is generally measured in word

families or base words. A word family consists of a base word and its inflected forms and derivations (Nation, 2001).

Scholars observed that at present the best conservative rule of thumb that speakers have is that up to a vocabulary size of around 20,000 word families. Thus, one should expect that native speakers will add roughly 1,000 word families a year to their vocabulary size. That means that a five-year-old beginning school will have a vocabulary of around 4,000 to 5,000 word families. A university graduate will have a vocabulary of around 20,000 word families (Goulden, Nation and Read, 1990). These figures are very rough and there is likely to be very large variation between individuals. Moreover, the figures exclude proper names, compound words, abbreviations, and foreign words. A word family is taken to include a base word, its inflected forms, and a small number of reasonably regular derived forms (Bauer and Nation, 1993). Some researchers suggest vocabulary sizes larger than these but in the well conducted studies (for example, D'Anna, Zechmeister and Hall, 1991) the differences are mainly the result of differences in what items are included in the count and how a word family is defined.

Studies concerning language learners' vocabulary size are generally related to what minimum number of words international students need to know for their studies (Sutarsyah, Nation, & Kennedy, 1994). For oral communication, the most frequent 2,000 words in the English language seem to suffice most of the time (Schonell et al., 1956). According to Hirsh and Nation (1992), to be able to read an unsimplified text in English for pleasure, the reader needs a vocabulary size of around 5,000. Nation (2006) also suggests that EFL learners need a vocabulary size between 6,000 and 7,000 for listening, and 8,000 and 9,000 for reading. Similarly, in order for a language learner to begin reading authentic texts, a vocabulary size of 3,000 words is regarded as the threshold, and 5,000 words will be enough to be able to read them (Schmitt, Schmitt & Clapham, 2001). Another claim is that native speakers of English have around 20,000 words at their disposal (Goulden, Nation & Read, 1990). For non-natives, a vocabulary knowledge of around 10,000 words in English is considered as a requirement for university education (Hazenbergh & Hulstijn, 1996). However, these figures should be regarded with precaution, especially for foreign language learners because their vocabulary sizes are not stable and may fluctuate because some lexical items are known at one point and in time these might be forgotten (Meara & Rodriguez, 1993). Therefore, the testing of L2 vocabulary level is both an important and a very challenging job. Conventionally, a dictionary is used for sampling L2 vocabulary to be tested, but this methodology is somewhat problematic as many dictionaries cannot provide frequency information for the lexical items. Even if they can, the dynamic and ever-changing nature of language requires systematic modifications about frequency levels. For example, it is very possible that there have been shifts recently in the top 2,000 most frequent words in the English language because of the media and the internet.

Schmitt (2000) advocates that vocabulary should best be taught to foreign language learners according to a cost-benefit perspective. He mentions the most frequent 2,000 words as the most commonly cited initial goal for beginners and agrees that these have to be taught explicitly. Meara (1995) claims these are so essential for any real language use that it might be a good idea to teach them right at the beginning of the language course. When learners move on to read authentic texts in the target language, the consensus among applied linguists seems to be that 3,000 to 5,000 word families should suffice. However, Hazenbergh and Hulstijn (Hazenbergh, 1994, Hazenbergh and Hulstijn, 1996) calculated that foreign students reading university texts need to have 10,000 to 11,000 word families at their disposal. For communication in specific professional domains, it is recommended to have a solid base of

high-frequency vocabulary, complemented with the specialized vocabulary required for the domain in question.

Most vocabulary researchers agree that although explicit vocabulary instruction should not cease after the 2,000 most frequent words, it is very important to make the learners responsible for their individual vocabulary learning.

A study by Milton and Meara (1995) using the Eurcentres Vocabulary Size Test (Meara and Jones, 1990) shows that significant vocabulary growth can occur if this learning is done in the second language environment. In their study of a study abroad program of 53 European students of advanced proficiency, the average growth in vocabulary per person approached a rate of 2500 words per year over the six months of the programme. This rate of growth is similar to the larger estimates of first language growth in adolescence. Although the goal of native speaker vocabulary size is a possible goal, it is a very ambitious one for most learners of English as a foreign language.

Barnard (2001) and Quinn (2000) provided evidence of Asian university students' low level of English vocabulary knowledge, even after extensive study of English at the secondary level. Quinn (2000) found that the average university entrant had a vocabulary of 1,000 words after six years of study, which represented a learning rate of little more than one word for each class hour of English instruction. Such limited vocabularies are clearly inadequate to meet the demands of university studies.

In the Philippine context, it has been observed that many students from the elementary schools to college lack the necessary productive English vocabulary knowledge which makes academic writing and public speaking difficult for them. Words that they commonly use in their speaking and writing are mostly within the 2,000–3,000 level, though many especially those exposed to the English language have productive vocabulary knowledge that is within the university word level.

Inadequacy of productive vocabulary was attributed to a variety of variables (Read, 2000) such as reading materials the students often read, interest in learning the language, exposure to the English language, time spent in reading and listening to English programs, education backgrounds, and exposure to information media. Research suggesting correlation between vocabulary knowledge and reading habits, exposure to the English language through books, media, and formal studies as well as the types of school where the students are enrolled were addressed in this paper.

If it is accepted that acquisition of more vocabulary is our goal but that there are simply too many words in the language for all or most of them to be dealt with one at a time through vocabulary instruction, then what is the next logical step? Teachers know that students who are learning to read and write and those who are reading to learn – that is, learning in content areas – will benefit from a sound instructional program with intervention plans on vocabulary enhancement. This is especially true for classrooms where learners have small vocabularies and are English language learners.

This study aimed to assess the breadth of productive vocabulary knowledge of selected pre-service teachers enrolled in two separate colleges. The findings of the investigation became the basis for the proposed intervention strategies for enhancement of future teachers in the elementary and high schools, who are expected to have wider productive vocabulary size.

Statement of the Problem

It sought answers to the following questions:

- 1. What is the level of productive vocabulary knowledge of the students grouped according to:**
 1. 1. type of school and
 1. 2. curriculum year level?
- 2. What is the performance of the students in the vocabulary test categorized according to the following frequency levels?**
 - 2.1. 2000 WL
 - 2.2. 3000 WL
 - 2.3. 5000 WL
 - 2.4. UWL
 - 2.5. 10,000 WL
- 3. How is the students' breadth of productive vocabulary knowledge related to:**
 - 3.1. type of school enrolled in;
 - 3.2. curriculum year level; and
 - 3.3. exposure to information media?
- 4. What intervention strategies may be proposed to enhance students' productive vocabulary knowledge?**

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference between the breadth of productive vocabulary knowledge of the freshmen and the seniors.
2. The students' breadth of productive vocabulary knowledge is not significantly related to the type of school where they are enrolled in.
3. The students' breadth of productive vocabulary knowledge is not significant related to their curriculum year level.
4. The students' breadth of productive vocabulary knowledge is not significantly related to their exposure to information media.

Methods and Materials

The Vocabulary Level Test (VLT), which was designed by Nation (1983, 1990) and widely used as a second language diagnostic test in New Zealand and other English-speaking countries, was adopted and used as a tool to measure selected pre-service teachers' breadth or size of productive vocabulary knowledge against word-frequency lists. The subjects were the pre-service teachers enrolled in state and private colleges. Only the freshmen and seniors taking up bachelor in Elementary Education and Bachelor in Secondary Education were chosen to participate in the study. Ten percent (10%) of the total population in the first and fourth year levels was taken.

This test was used because it was found out to be useful in viewing the vocabulary of English as consisting of series of levels based on frequency of occurrence. The student's ability to use a word was measured in a constrained context where they had to perform a fill-in task.

The test focused on a controlled production measure of vocabulary consisting of items from five frequency levels, and used a completion item type. For each item, a meaningful sentence context was presented and the first letters of the target item were provided. The first letters prevented the test-takers from filling another word which would be semantically appropriate in the given context but which comes from a different frequency level.

The format of the test resembled that of Klein-Barley's C- test. In addition, the test sampled 18 items at each of the 2,000, 3,000, 5,000, university, and 10,000 word levels.

Each of the five frequency levels of the PVLIT is represented by 18 items on the test, making 90 questions total. Within each level, the items are presented in order of higher to lower frequency. Thus, the questions tend to increase in difficulty since lower frequency words tend to be more difficult. Because the words are taken from a leveled sampling, scores on the test provide a rough estimate of the students' vocabulary size. For instance, if a student testing at the 1–2,000-word level gets 9 out of the 18 items correct, it can be assumed that he or she knows roughly 500 out of the 1,000 word families from that level. Furthermore, since higher-frequency words are generally acquired first, the rest of the words in each sentence are always more frequent than the word being tested. Likewise, whether a student has satisfactorily mastered a level or not is determined by the administrator of the test, but a score of 85% to 90% at the 2,000-word level would indicate that the student can use the most frequent words of English (Nation, 1983). Following Nation's instructions items were considered correct if students wrote the correct word and part of speech, even if there were mistakes in spelling or grammar.

The mean, standard deviation, t-test, analysis of variance (ANOVA), and the Pearson Product Moment Correlation were used to calculate the data gathered.

Results and Discussion

1 Level of Productive Vocabulary Knowledge of Pre-Service Teachers Grouped According to:

1.1 Type of School. Most of the research reviewed suggest that the learners' linguistic environment contributes to their vocabulary development or enhancement. Such linguistic environment refers to the school where they are enrolled in. though the findings were not conclusive, a few research results suggest that those who study in private schools tend to have wider or richer vocabulary in English than those who are enrolled in government-owned or public schools.

Table 1 shows a comparison of the private colleges' and SUC's breadth of productive vocabulary knowledge.

Group and Level	Mean	SD	Standard Error of Mean	Computed t-Value	Probability Level
<u>2000 WL</u>					
Public	12.88	2.64	.327	4.66	.000
Private	9.98	3.96	.572		
<u>3000 WL</u>					
Public	7.72	2.95	.366	7.44	.000
Private	3.54	2.95	.426		
<u>5000 WL</u>					
Public	7.154	2.36	.293	6.196	.000
Private	4.33	2.44	.351		
<u>UWL</u>					
Public	9.754	3.250	.403	6.171	.000
Private	6.000	3.122	.451		
<u>1000 WL</u>					
Public	5.277	2.23	.276	5.997	.000
Private	2.92	1.83	.264		
<u>Total</u>					
Public	42.92	10.48	1.30	7.454	.000
Private	26.73	12.58	1.82		

Table 1: Comparison between the productive vocabulary knowledge of pre-service teachers grouped according to type of school

Table 1 shows that the pre-service teachers enrolled in the public college obtained a relatively higher mean score than those from the private in all test levels. The total mean score obtained by the public school students was 42.92 while those from the private school was 26.73. This implies that pre-service teachers in the public school have wider vocabulary knowledge than those from the private college. Thus, the hypothesis which stated that there was no significant difference between the productive vocabulary knowledge of students from private school and those from the public school was rejected. However, neither group obtained satisfactory mastery level in all the test levels because of a very low total mean score.

The findings concurred with the research results of the U.S. Department of Education Office of Educational Research and Improvement: The Condition of Education 1997 (<https://nces.ed.gov/pubs97/97983.pdf>), Cobbold (2015), and Mosqueda & Maldonado (2013). In their study that aimed to determine how private and public schools differ, the researchers found that students enrolled in private schools had higher proficiency level and richer vocabulary in English than those who were enrolled in the public schools. This could be attributed to the stricter policy implementation on using English in the school, including the students' access to the necessary reading materials and technology that are available and allowed to be used in their school.

1.2 Curriculum Year Level. The length of academic residence determined by the year level of the students has been found to have significant role in their acquisition or learning of vocabulary. It is assumed that since seniors or fourth year students have stayed longer in the school as compared with the freshmen or first year students, their vocabulary size is larger or wider. Likewise, their learning of the English language in different courses from first to fourth years has given them wider edge over the first year students.

Table 2 shows the data on the level of productive vocabulary knowledge of the students based on curriculum year level.

Group and Level	Mean	SD	Standard Error of the Mean	Computed t-Value	Probability Level
<u>2000 WL</u>					
Freshmen	10.0364	3.7906	.5111	-4.109	.000
Seniors	13.1724	2.5211	.3310		
<u>3000 WL</u>					
Freshmen	4.8909	3.6141	.4873	-5.203	.002
Seniors	6.9483	3.3109	.4347		
<u>5000 WL</u>					
Freshmen	6.8276	2.8543	.3849	-3.158	.000
		2.3852	.3132		
<u>UWL</u>					
Freshmen	4.0909	2.7774	.3745	-3.627	.000
Seniors	4.4483	1.9119	.2510		
<u>1000 WL</u>					
Freshmen	6.8182	3.5647	.4807	-.800	.425
Seniors	9.4310	3.3619	.4414		
<u>Total</u>					
Freshmen	30.8727	14.5132	1.9570	-4.010	.000
Seniors	40.9483	11.4439	1.5027		

Table 2: Comparison between the productive vocabulary knowledge of pre-service teachers grouped according to curriculum year level

The seniors got relatively higher scores than those of the freshmen in all test levels. The total mean score of the seniors was 40.9483 whereas that of the freshmen was 30.8727. The statistical data indicates that the seniors have wider productive vocabulary knowledge than the freshmen. Thus, the hypothesis which stated that there was no significant difference between the productive vocabulary knowledge of the students from the public school and those from the private school was rejected. However, the very low mean score revealed that neither group performed satisfactorily in the level tests.

The findings correspond to those of the studies of Barker (2013) but not with the research findings of Coleman (1973) who observed that in some items in the English proficiency tests conducted, the freshmen scored higher than the seniors in the English proficiency tests that covered vocabulary, reading and grammar. However, the study of Afshar and Asakereh (2016) revealed that there was no significant difference in the senior and freshmen's use of English vocabulary as manifested in their spoken exercises. The result suggests that the length of academic residency in the school does not necessarily make one better in English, neither make his/her English vocabulary wider or richer.

2 Students' Performance Level in the Vocabulary Tests Based on the Word Frequency Levels

A recent study on vocabulary size declared the prominent role of the breadth of vocabulary knowledge in reading comprehension. Over two decades, researchers have found that breadth test of vocabulary knowledge can very well predict success in reading, writing, general proficiency, and academic achievement (Laufer & Goldstein, 2004; Nation & Meara, 2002).

Nation and his colleagues (1990; 1995; 1997) have attempted to build a systematic approach to vocabulary instruction, with their frequency-based Vocabulary Levels Test at its center. Based on corpus analysis and experimental research, the Levels Test samples words from the 2,000, 3,000, 5,000, and 10,000-word frequency levels, and from a zone of academic discourse

known as the University Word List (UWL, recently supplanted by the Academic Word List). The test provides diagnostic advice as to where learners could most usefully direct their word-learning efforts, in view of their reading goals (e.g., whether or not they intend to do academic reading) and the predicted return on learning investment at the various levels (e.g., high at the 2,000 level, low at the 10,000 level).

Table 3 shows the level of productive vocabulary knowledge of the pre-service teachers.

Level	Mean	SD
2000 WL	11.65	3.56
3000 WL	5.947	3.60
5000 WL	5.956	2.76
University WL	8.159	2.37
Total	36.04	13.9

Table 3: Level of productive vocabulary knowledge of pre-service teachers

The total mean score that indicated the overall level of productive vocabulary knowledge of the pre-service teachers in both colleges was 36.04, a relatively very low score. Their performance was highest at 2000 WL with a mean score of 11.65, 5.947 in the 3000 WL, 5.956 in the 5000 WL, 8.159 in the UWL, and 4.274 in the 10000 WL. There was a descending order of scores except in UWL.

The overall result revealed that the pre-service teachers did not meet the mastery level set by Laufer and Nation (1990) at 16 out of 18 which means that if a student scored 16 on a particular level of test, better if in all test categories, the student is considered knowledgeable of the words at that frequency level.

3 Breadth of Productive Vocabulary Knowledge of the Students and Its Relation to Certain Variables

Research on vocabulary acquisition has shown that the primary source of vocabulary for speakers is a wide range of contexts that enable them to experiment and to confirm, expand or narrow down the lexical nets (Carter, 1992). This process could be based on several influencing factors such as explicit formal instruction and incidental learning from large amounts of language input. The teacher's approach to vocabulary teaching (i.e. vocabulary teaching strategies) and his or her understanding of the key notions in vocabulary acquisition, the effort invested by learners in vocabulary learning (i.e. vocabulary learning strategies) as well as their readiness to take responsibility for their own learning, and, finally, the interaction of all the factors such as the teaching and learning environment (e.g. the school), length of language learning in the school (curriculum year level), and exposure to information media (e.g. local radio.TV, internet, and the print media).

3.1 Type of School Enrolled in. Basing the analysis on Table 1, the data suggest that there was a significant relation between the students' breadth of productive vocabulary knowledge and the type of school enrolled in. Therefore, the hypothesis which stated that there was no significant relation between the students' productive vocabulary knowledge and the type of school where they were enrolled was rejected. Those enrolled in the public college got higher mean scores in all the tests than those enrolled in the private college.

3.2. Curriculum Year Level. Basing the analysis on Table 2, the data suggest that there was a significant relation between the students' breadth of productive vocabulary knowledge and

their curriculum year level. Thus, the hypothesis which stated that there was no significant relation between the students' productive vocabulary knowledge and their curriculum year level was rejected. The seniors got scores in all the tests higher than those of the freshmen's scores.

3.3. Exposure to Information Media. Table 4 shows the mean score of the students whose exposure to information media greatly influence their vocabulary size.

Vocabulary Level	Media	N	Mean	SD	Std. Error
2000 WL	Local TV	73	11.9452	3.5664	.4174
	Cable network	9	12.8889	2.3688	.7896
	Radio	16	10.0000	3.7947	.9487
	Internet	9	9.5000	4.5497	.1857
	Print/Books	6	12.3333	2.2361	.7454
	Total	113	11.6460	3.555	.3345
	Local TV	73	6.2877	3.4900	.4085
	Cable network	9	6.4444	3.1269	1.042
	Radio	16	5.0000	4.1952	1.049
	Internet	6	2.3333	2.0656	.8433
	Print/Books	9	6.7778	3.5277	1.176
	Total	113	5.9469	3.5977	.3384
5000 WL	Local TV	73	6.5205	2.4950	.2920
	Cable network	9	5.7778	2.5386	.8462
	Radio	16	4.4375	3.28857	.8214
	Internet	6	3.1667	2.1370	.8724
	Print/Books	9	6.1111	2.8038	.9346
	Total	113	5.9558	2.7626	.2599
10000 WL	Local TV	73	4.6027	2.4195	.2832
	Cable network	9	4.5556	2.5055	.8352
	Radio	16	3.1875	1.0950	.4763
	Internet	6	2.8333	1.1690	.4773
	Print/Books	9	4.2222	2.6352	.8784
	Total	113	4.2743	2.3689	.2228
UWL	Local TV	73	8.3288	3.8372	.449
	Cable network	9	8.5556	2.4552	.8184
	Radio	16	7.1875	3.4875	.8719
	Internet	6	5.333	2.8075	.1145
	Print/Books	9	10.0000	3.4641	1.155
	Total	113	8.1593	3.6877	.3469
Grand Total	Local TV	73	37.7260	13.6568	1.598
	Cable network	9	38.5556	9.3690	3.123
	Radio	16	29.8925	15.4368	3.859
	Internet	6	22.8333	10.9255	4.460
	Print/Books	9	39.7778	12.9690	4.323
	Total	113	36.0442	13.9209	1.310

Table 4: Exposure to information media and its relation to the pre-service teachers' breadth of productive vocabulary knowledge

The table shows that there was a significant relation between the students' breadth of productive vocabulary knowledge and their exposure to information media. However, the level of significance was .028 which is relatively lower than the .05 level of significance.

Students who were more often exposed to print, cable network, and local TV programs had wider productive vocabulary knowledge (as seen in their scores in all the test levels) than those who were just exposed to radio and internet). The findings suggest that majority of the students gain more vocabulary from the print media, books, cable network, and local TV shows than from the internet. Internet to the students would only be available to them if they go internet shops or if their personal computer is connected with the internet. The findings concurred with those of Kruekaew, Tongkumchum & Choonpradub (2008) and Chaowakeeratiphong (2004) who discovered that factors such as the use of technology (internet) and regular assignments that required students to read books and other printed materials greatly helped in improving their vocabulary skills.

4 Proposed Intervention Strategies for Vocabulary Enhancement in the Classroom

A considerable amount of evidence suggests that approaches involving early intervention, ongoing progress monitoring, and effective classroom instruction consistent with response to intervention (RTI) are associated with improved outcomes for the majority of students learning English as a second language.

Box 1 contains a list of intervention strategies that the teacher may use to enhance English vocabulary of students in the classroom.

Intervention Strategies
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teach vocabulary as a pre-reading exercise in the classroom. 2. Use experiential learning as an approach to teaching vocabulary. 3. Introduce a conceptual framework that will enable students to build appropriate background for themselves. 4. Use word web to organize details about a word. 5. Put up a word wall or word bulletin where words learned for a week are written alphabetically on the bulletin board. 6. Use word definition concept to learn and remember content vocabulary and concept 7. Apply word sorts by categorizing words or phrases into groups 8. Use vocabulary match-up cards to help students identify the correct meaning of a given word. 9. Require students to have a personalized word bank or word dictionaries which will serve as individual vocabulary and spelling resources 10. Encourage simple illustrations to represent words they are learning 11. Provide vocabulary games and activities 12. Scaffold language and opportunities to respond. Scaffolding language includes paraphrasing key words, providing opportunities to extend answers, supporting language by using familiar synonyms (e.g., “that is also like...”) and familiar antonyms (e.g., “that is also different from...”), reframing students' responses, confirming aspects of the answer that are correct, and providing language supports to further explain aspects that require refinement. 13. Provide opportunities for appropriate peer learning, including peer pairing and small-group instruction. 14. Teach important vocabulary words and require students to identify prefix, root word, suffix, and definition.

15. Create a classroom environment where contextual teaching strategies of vocabulary terms are utilized.
16. Teach generally academic words across genres.
17. Begin and end vocabulary instruction with dictionary definitions.
18. Use a range of words related to the target word and to explicitly discuss how prefixes (such as re-) change its meaning.
19. Use dialogic and repeated reading with open-ended questioning, "wh-" questioning, and active listening during shared book reading to encourage the child to tell the story. The reader can point to "new words" and discuss them.
20. Expose students to a variety of texts or reading materials of different text types.

Box 1: Intervention strategies that the teacher may use to enhance students' English vocabulary

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions are drawn.

1. Pre-service teachers in both public and private schools still lack the productive vocabulary knowledge in English to make them proficient and effective speakers and writers.
2. Students from public schools have wider vocabulary knowledge than those from the private school. However, the breadth of their vocabulary knowledge is not sufficient to make them effective user of the language.
3. Longer exposure to the English language in the school helps increase vocabulary size.
4. Exposure to information media helps widens breadth of productive vocabulary.
5. While this study revealed significant difference between the performance of the pre-service teachers from the public and private schools in terms of the breadth of their productive vocabulary, the findings are still inconclusive.
6. The findings from this study call for a recognition of the importance of improving depth of vocabulary knowledge in learners' ESL learning processes and teaching of vocabulary in the classroom.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are offered.

1. The Productive Vocabulary Levels Test was found to be a reliable, valid, and practical measure of vocabulary growth. It should be used, then, in all tertiary institutions as an additional quantitative measure for students' vocabulary size.
2. In assessing students' vocabulary size, the C-test is highly recommended since it does not only measure one aspect of the language but also the overall language proficiency of the learner.

3. Students should be provided adequate access to the computer/internet, cable network, English reading materials, and television in the school.
4. Teaching time allotted for vocabulary development in all classes where English is used as the medium of instruction should be lengthened.
5. Teachers need to have clear sensible goals for vocabulary learning. Frequency information provides a rational basis for making sure that learners get the best return for their vocabulary learning effort.
6. Vocabulary frequency lists which take account of range have an important role to play in curriculum design and in setting learning goals. Thus, course designers should have lists to refer to when they consider the vocabulary component of a language course, and teachers need to have reference lists to judge whether a particular word deserves attention or not, and whether a text is suitable for a class.
7. Learning word-building processes in the target language, guessing from context and applying mnemonic techniques are strategies that ESL teachers should use in vocabulary instruction.
8. Further research into the effects of other social variables (e.g. students' fields of specialization) on the students' vocabulary size should be made.
9. Intervention program on additional language development and enhancement, particularly on vocabulary development, should be proposed.

References

- Akbarian, I. (2010). The relationship between vocabulary size and depth for ESP/EAP learners. *System*, 38(3), 391–401. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2010.06.013>
- Alderson, J. C. (2007). Judging the frequency of English words, *Applied Linguistics*, 28(3). <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amm024>
- Almela, M. & A. Sánchez (2007). Words as Lexical Units in Learning/Teaching Vocabulary, *IJES*, 7(2).
- Afshar, H. S. & Asakerh, A. (2016). Speaking skills problems encountered by Iranian EFL freshmen and seniors from their own and their English instructors' perspectives. *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, 13(1), 112–130.
- Barker, D. G. (2013). *Cross-linguistic influences in multilingual language acquisition*. New York: Springer Heidelberg.
- Cameron, L., (2002). Measuring vocabulary size in English as an additional language. *Language Teaching Research*, 6. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1362168802lr103oa>
- Chaowakeeratiphong, T. (2004). *Factors related to achievement in English of students in Rajabhat universities in the northern region* (Report). Kamphaengphet Rajabhat University.
- Cobbold, T. (April 2015). A review of academic studies of public and private school outcomes in Australia. Retrieved from <http://www.saveourschools.com.au>
- Coleman, J. (1973). Style and substance in American education. In Bowman, C. (Ed), *Humanistic Sociology Readings* (pp. 201–211). New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts.
- Fan, M. (2000). How big is the gap and how to narrow it? An investigation into the active and passive vocabulary knowledge of 12 learners. *RELC Journal*, 31(2), 105–119. <http://doi.org/10.1177/003368820003100205>
- Farvardin, M. T., & Koosha, M. (2011). The role of vocabulary knowledge in Iranian EFL students' reading comprehension performance: Breadth or depth? *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 1(11), 1575–1580. <http://doi.org/10.4304/tpls.1.11.1575-1580>
- Gardner, D., (2007). Validating the construct of word in applied corpus-based vocabulary research: A critical survey, *Applied Linguistics*, 28(2). <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amm010>
- Goulden, R., Nation, P., & Read, J. (1990). How large can a receptive vocabulary be? *Applied Linguistics*, 11. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/11.4.341>
- Guthrie, R. G., Benneth, H. I., & McGough, A. J. (2010). Attitude change: lesson from research and practice. *An Australian Journal of Gifted Education*, 11(2), 26–34.
- Hazenbergh, S. & Hulstijn, J. H. (1996). Defining a minimal receptive second-language vocabulary for non-native university students: An empirical investigation, *Applied Linguistics*, 17(2). <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/17.2.145>
- Kruekaew, T., Tongkumchum, H., & Choonpradub, C. (2008) Factors affecting English vocabulary skill of undergraduates. *Asian Social Science*, 4(9).
- Laufer, B. (1998). The development of passive and active vocabulary in a second language: same or different? *Applied Linguistics*, 19(2). <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/19.2.255>
- Laufer, B. & Nation, I. S. P. (1999). A vocabulary size test of controlled productive knowledge. *Language Testing*. <https://doi.org/10.1191/026553299672614616>
- Laufer, B., Elger, C., Hill, K. & Congdon, P. (2004). Size and strength: Do we need both to measure vocabulary knowledge? *Language Testing*, 21. <https://doi.org/10.1191/0265532204lt277oa>
- Laufer, B., & Goldstein, Z. (2004). Testing vocabulary knowledge: Size, strength, and computer adaptiveness. *Language Learning*, 54. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0023-8333.2004.00260.x>

- Laufer, B. & Nation, P. (1995). Vocabulary size and use: Lexical richness in L2 written production. *Applied Linguistics*, 16. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/16.3.307>
- Laufer, B. & Nation, P. (1999). A productive-size test of controlled productive ability. *Language Testing*, 16. <https://doi.org/10.1191/026553299672614616>
- Lennon, P. (1990). The bases for vocabulary teaching at the advanced level. *I.T.L.*, 87–88. <https://doi.org/10.1075/itl.87-88.01len>
- Marzban, A., & Hadipour, R. (2012). Depth versus breadth of vocabulary knowledge: Assessing their roles in Iranian intermediate EFL students' lexical inferencing success through reading. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 46, 5296–5300. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.06.426>
- Meara, P. & Jones, G. (1990). *The Eurocentres vocabulary size tests 10KA*. Zurich: Eurocentres.
- Meara, P. (2002). EFL vocabulary tests. *Tests/Evaluation Instruments*, University of Wales Swansea.
- Mosqueda, E. & Maldonado, S. (2013). The effects of English language proficiency and curricular pathways: Latina/os' mathematics achievement in secondary schools. Retrieved: [https://people.ucsc.edu/~simaldon/index.html/Ueee_A_780647%20\(2\).pdf](https://people.ucsc.edu/~simaldon/index.html/Ueee_A_780647%20(2).pdf)
- Nation, I. S. P. (2006). How large a vocabulary is needed for reading and listening? *Canadian Modern Language Review/La Revue Canadienne des Langues Vivantes*, 63(1), 59–82. <http://doi.org/10.3138/cmlr.63.1.59>
- Nation, I. S. P. & Coxhead, A. (2014). Vocabulary size research at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. *Language Teaching*, 47(03), 398–403. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0261444814000111>
- Pikulski, J. J. and Templeton, S. (2004). Teaching and developing vocabulary: key to long-term reading success. Retrieved from http://www.eduplace.com/marketing/nc/pdf/author_pages.pdf.
- Quian, D. D. (2002). Investigating the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and academic reading performance: an assessment perspective, *Language Learning*, 52(3). <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9922.00193>
- Read, J. (1995). *Assessing vocabulary*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ringbom, H. (1998). Vocabulary frequencies in advanced learner English: A cross-linguistic approach. In S. Granger (Ed.), *Learner English on Computer*, (pp. 41–52). London: Longman.
- Shaw, P. & Liu, E.T.-K. (1998). What develops in the development of second-language writing? *Applied Linguistics*, 19(2). <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/19.2.225>
- Sidek, H. M. & Rahima, H. A. (2015). The role of vocabulary knowledge in reading comprehension: a cross-linguistic study. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 197. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.07.046>
- Swain, M. (1985). Communicative competence: Some roles of comprehensible input and output in its development. In S. Gass & C. Madden (Eds.) *Input in Second Language Acquisition* (pp. 235–253). Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
- Ünaldı, İ. (2011). *A comparative investigation of lexical networks of Turkish learners of English as a foreign language: A corpus based study*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Çukurova University, Adana.
- Webb, S. (2008). Receptive and productive vocabulary sizes of L2 learners. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 30(1), 79–95. <http://doi.org/10.1017/S0272263108080042>

Corresponding author: Cecilia L. Calub

Email: calubcecilia@yahoo.com

Appendix 1

Levels Test of Productive Vocabulary

One of two equivalent versions of the Levels Test of Productive Vocabulary: Parallel Version 1 (Version C) designed by Paul Nation (1990).

Complete the underlined words. The example has been done for you.
He was riding a *bicycle*.

The 2,000-Word Level

1. I'm glad we had this opp__ to talk.
2. There are a doz__ eggs in the basket.
3. Every working person must pay income t__.
4. The pirates buried the trea__ on a desert island.
5. Her beauty and cha__ had a powerful effect on men.
6. La__ of rain led to a shortage of water in the city.
7. He takes cr__ and sugar in his coffee.
8. The rich man died and left all his we__ to his son.
9. Pup__ must hand in their papers by the end of the week.
10. This sweater is too tight. It needs to be stret__.
11. Ann intro__ her boyfriend to her mother.
12. Teenagers often adm__ and worship pop singers.
13. If you blow up that balloon any more it will bur__.
14. In order to be accepted into the university, he had to impr__ his grades.
15. The telegram was deli__ two hours after it had been sent.
16. The differences were so sl__ that they went unnoticed.
17. The dress you're wearing is lov__.
18. He wasn't very popu__ when he was a teenager, but he has many friends now.

The 3,000-Word Level

1. He has a successful car__ as a lawyer.
2. The thieves threw ac__ in his face and made him blind.
3. To improve the country's economy, the government decided on economic ref__.
4. She wore a beautiful green go__ to the ball.
5. The government tried to protect the country's industry by reducing the imp__ of cheap goods.
6. The children's games were funny at first, but finally got on the parents' ner__.
7. The lawyer gave some wise coun__ to his client.
8. Many people in England mow the la__ of their houses on Sunday morning.
9. The farmer sells the eggs that his he__ lays.
10. Sudden noises at night sca__ me a lot.
11. France was proc__ a republic in the 18th century.
12. Many people are inj__ in road accidents every year.
13. Suddenly he was thro__ into the dark room.
14. He perc__ a light at the end of the tunnel.
15. Children are not independent. They are att__ to their parents.
16. She showed off her sle__ figure in a long narrow dress.

17. She has been changing partners often because she cannot have a sta__ relationship with one person.
18. You must wear a bathing suit on a public beach. You're not allowed to be na__.

The 5,000-Word Level

1. Soldiers usually swear an oa__ of loyalty to their country.
2. The voter pla__ the ball in the box.
3. They keep their valuables in a vau__ at the bank.
4. A bird per__ at the window sill.
5. The kitten is playing with a ball of ya__.
6. The thieves have forced an ent__ into the building.
7. The small hill was really a burial mou__.
8. We decided to celebrate New Year's E__ together.
9. The soldier was asked to choose between infantry and cav__.
10. This is a complex problem which is difficult to compr__.
11. The angry crowd sho__ the prisoner as he was leaving the court.
12. Don't pay attention to this rude remark. Just ign__ it.
13. The management held a secret meeting. The issues discussed were not disc__ to the workers.
14. We could hear the sergeant bel__ commands to the troops.
15. The boss got angry with the secretary and it took a lot of tact to soo__ him.
16. We do not have adeq__ information to make a decision.
17. She is not a child, but a mat__ woman. She can make her own decisions.
18. The prisoner was put in soli__ confinement.

The University Word List Level

1. There has been a recent tr__ among prosperous families towards a smaller number of children.
2. The ar__ of his office is 25 square meters.
3. Phil examines the mea__ of life.
4. According to the communist doc__, workers should rule the world.
5. Spending many years together deepened their inti__.
6. He usually read the sport sec__ of the newspaper first.
7. Because of the doctors' strike the cli__ is closed today.
8. There are several misprints on each page of this te__.
9. The suspect had both opportunity and mon__ to commit the murder.
10. They insp__ all products before sending them out to stores.
11. A considerable amount of evidence was accum__ during the investigation.
12. The victim's shirt was satu__ with blood.
13. He is irresponsible. You cannot re__ on him for help.
14. It's impossible to eva__ these results without knowing about the research methods that were used.
15. He finally att__ a position of power in the company.
16. The story tells us about a crime and subs__ punishment.
17. In a hom__ class all students are of a similar proficiency.
18. The urge to survive is inh__ in all creatures.

The 10,000-Word Level

1. The baby is wet. Her dia__ needs changing.
2. The prisoner was released on par__.
3. Second year University students in the US are called soph__.
4. Her favorite flowers were or__.
5. The insect causes damage to plants by its toxic sec__.
6. The evac__ of the building saved many lives.
7. For many people, wealth is a prospect of unimaginable felic__.
8. She found herself in a pred__ without any hope for a solution.
9. The deac__ helped with the care of the poor of the parish.
10. The hurricane whi__ along the coast.
11. Some coal was still smol__ among the ashes.
12. The dead bodies were muti__ beyond recognition.
13. She was sitting on a balcony and bas__ in the sun.
14. For years waves of invaders pill__ towns along the coast.
15. The rescue attempt could not proceed quickly. It was imp__ by bad weather.
16. I wouldn't hire him. He is unmotivated and indo__.
17. Computers have made typewriters old-fashioned and obs__.
18. Watch out for his wil__ tricks.

the iafor
journal of language learning

ISSN: 2188-9554