

UNIVERSIDADE DE SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA
FACULTADE DE FILOLOXÍA
DEPARTAMENTO DE FILOLOXÍA INGLESA E ALEMÁ



English Vocabulary Teaching and
Learning in the Galician EFL
Context. The Role and
Importance of Vocabulary
Learning Strategies

Doctoral dissertation submitted by Raquel Fernández Carril
Supervised by Dr. Ignacio Miguel Palacios Martínez

Santiago de Compostela, 2009

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TESE DE DOUTORAMENTO

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Vº Prce.
do Director

Doutoranda

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Ao meu avó, de quen aprendín a valorar as miñas raíces.

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List of abbreviations

BAC	Post-compulsory secondary education
BALLI	Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESL	English as a Second Language
ESO	Compulsory secondary education
FL	Foreign Language
L1	First language
L2	Second language
LLS	Language Learning Strategy
OTH	Other teaching institutions
SILL	Strategy Inventory for Language Learning
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
SVLSQ	Student Vocabulary Learning Strategies Questionnaire
TL	Target Language
TVLSQ	Teacher Vocabulary Learning Strategies Questionnaire
UNI	University students
VLS	Vocabulary Learning Strategy
VLT	Vocabulary Levels Test

PART 1
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Chapter 1

Introduction

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1. Background to the study

The integration of Spain into the EU has made FL¹ learning a crucial step towards the construction of the European multi-cultural identity; the mastering of a foreign language opens the roads for the transit of citizens whether for work, business, or tourism purposes, as well as for cultural and informational exchanges of all kinds.

In this light, the status of English as a global language in politics, economics, education and the media, especially the Internet, is widely acknowledged and, as Crystal claims, Spain is not an exception:

English is now the language most widely taught as a foreign language - in over 100 countries, such as China, Russia, Germany, Spain, Egypt, and Brazil - and in most of these countries it is emerging as the chief foreign language to be encountered in schools, often displacing another language in the process. (2003: 5)

Hence, the ever-expanding social demand for the teaching of EFL. To meet these requirements, the European Council established a *Common European Framework of Reference* (2002) for the learning of foreign languages pointing to the progressive development of students' communicative language competence.

¹ L2 and FL will be used interchangeably in this study, meaning a language other than the first language.

This has its reflection in the Organic Law of Education (LOE 2/2006), which involves the reform of the Spanish education system according to the EU common policy, encouraging the exchange of teachers and students across member states (SOCRATES and ERASMUS exchange programmes).

Galicia, an Autonomous Region of Spain with two official languages (Spanish and Galician), has also undergone the implementation of the communicative approach to EFL teaching. This approach assumes that students become the focus of their own learning process while teachers act as the guides that help them through the communicative process. Hence, as Canale and Swain (1980) put it, students are supposed to acquire², on the one hand, the grammatical competence of linguistic terms and rules and, on the other hand, sociolinguistic competence (appropriateness to a non-linguistic context), discourse competence (cohesion and coherence) and strategic competence (verbal and non-verbal communication strategies).

Within this approach, Meara (1996) stated the importance of a good lexical command since it is said to be “at the core of communicative competence” (Miralpeix, 2008: 3). Actually, vocabulary³ plays a very important role in the

² It is worth remarking that in the current study the terms FL “acquisition” and “learning” are used as synonyms, in spite of Krashen’s (1981) acquisition-learning hypothesis. He distinguished between acquisition as a subconscious process whereby linguistic competence is developed and learning, referring to formal instruction in a classroom. However, FL competence development will be indiscriminately referred to as acquisition or learning.

³ In spite of the distinction between the term ‘lexis’, meaning “all the words that belong to a particular subject or language” and ‘vocabulary’, understood as “words known, learnt, used” (*Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*), both words will be interchangeably used in this study.

development of the communicative functions set in specific contents; so students are required to master not only word morphology, syntax, spelling and phonetics, but also semantic problems that may arise from contextual issues.

Given the complexity involved in acquiring an acceptable lexical competence and the prominence placed on the learner in the process of FL learning, scholars have acknowledged the importance of providing learners with tools that facilitate this task.

In my condition of an EFL teacher, it is disheartening to see the difficulties displayed by learners in their use of both receptive and productive vocabulary, which results in low academic achievement. Therefore, there is a necessity of reflecting on the current state of affairs regarding vocabulary learning and teaching, and the scope for improvement. It is in this particular context where vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs), a notion that will be explained in the following chapter, become really relevant.

In the last few decades, the bulk of empirical research has been conducted on the VLSs employed by EFL learners mainly in Asia, China and Japan (Gu and Johnson, 1996; Schmitt, 1997; Kudo, 1999; Fan, 2003; Li, 2004; Wu, 2005; Hong, 2006; Wei, 2007). In Spain, few studies have been carried out to this end (Jiménez-Catalán, 2003) and, to my knowledge, none of them in Galicia.

Thus, the aim of the current investigation is to fill this gap by providing empirical data on the strategies employed by Galician learners in the acquisition of FL lexis.

1.2. Purpose of the investigation

Previous research (Horwitz, 1987; Wenden, 1987; Oxford, 1990) has proved that learners' beliefs do influence the choice and use of specific learning strategies. Focusing on FL vocabulary learning, some scholars (Gu and Johnson, 1996; Fan, 1999; Li, 2004) acknowledged the importance of taking into account the study of assumptions on lexical acquisition since they certainly affect learners' use of VLSs.

In this vein, the purpose of this investigation is to shed light on the process of EFL vocabulary teaching and learning within the Galician context in order to reflect on the results and thus draw the corresponding pedagogical implications.

For this purpose, the current study gathered data from both EFL learners with different lexical proficiency levels (from secondary school to university) and EFL teachers so as to compare the information elicited from the subjects involved in the teaching and learning process. A mismatch between teachers' and learners' results might account for the low academic performance observed.

Firstly, the researcher tried to find out the beliefs about vocabulary that these two groups bring to the English class, which may condition the way words are learnt and taught. Secondly, a survey on the learning strategies employed by learners in the process of FL acquisition was conducted. Teachers were at the same time inquired about the VLSs perceived in their students for a further analysis to determine whether there was any discrepancy among these two groups, that is, teachers and learners.

Furthermore, personal factors that influence the choice of learning strategies, as pointed out by Oxford (1990), such as gender, age, proficiency, grade and

length of time learning English, as well as the beliefs held about vocabulary and the VLSs used were also investigated.

1.3. Significance of the study

The introduction of the communicative approach in the Galician schools has replaced the traditional emphasis almost exclusively on grammar by the acknowledgement of teaching based on the so-called four skills, namely, listening, reading, speaking and writing. Textbooks are not structured according to grammar but to communicative functions whilst vocabulary and grammar contents are integrated into meaningful communicative situations within specific contexts.

It takes a long while for students and teachers to get used to this methodological revolution. Indeed, one of its most direct consequences is the great change of roles in the teaching process: EFL lessons have shifted from a teacher-centred to a learner-centred approach. The teacher is no longer an all-knowing figure but rather a guide, a helper; in contrast, learners become the true protagonists, required to take responsibility for their own learning.

Therefore, the main aim is to foster learner's autonomy and the teacher's role is to enhance their students' skills to achieve it. Thus, knowledge about learning strategies, particularly those applied to lexis, seems to be essential for their efficient use, which certainly depends on individuals. Yet, extensive information on VLSs may offer a variety of strategies for students to choose the ones that suit best their personal characteristics.

Nevertheless, little research has been conducted on VLSs within the Galician context. The present study provides data on the beliefs about vocabulary held by Galician EFL learners and their use of VLSs with the aim of shedding light on this issue. On the one hand, it offers students an opportunity to reflect on the procedures carried out in lexical acquisition. On the other hand, teachers can gain better insight into this process, so they can help students find their own way, fostering autonomy, and improve lexical achievement, reinforcing students' self-esteem.

In short, the results obtained by the current study attempt to provide useful information on the state of the art of the learners' attitudes and beliefs about vocabulary teaching and learning as well as the VLSs used by Galician EFL learners as a first step towards the incorporation of VLS training into the curriculum.

1.4. Dissertation outline

The present study consists of six chapters. This introductory chapter analyses the necessity of conducting an investigation of the kind. Then, it offers an account of the aims pursued and it highlights its value within the Galician EFL context. Finally, an overview of the dissertation is presented.

Chapter 2 reviews the relevant literature considered in this investigation. Firstly, it provides a theoretical framework for the notion of 'vocabulary' and how to learn and teach it. Secondly, motivated by the learner-centred approach, it considers the theories that deal with learners' previous beliefs and assumptions about lexis and it also discusses previous empirical research on the area. Thirdly,

it gives an account of the literature regarding language learning strategies: definition, classification and factors influencing their use based on prior studies. It moves on, then, to focus on VLSs in particular, covering different taxonomies and investigation done worldwide. Finally, the chapter proceeds to outline reports on strategy training.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology employed in the investigation. It presents the research questions and provides a detailed account of the participants who volunteered to take part in the study. Moreover, the data collection instruments employed, i.e. questionnaires, interviews and vocabulary tests are evaluated. It also presents the pilot study carried out prior to the main study as well as the changes introduced in the research instruments, based on this piloting. The chapter ends with a report on the data analysis procedures.

Chapter 4 presents, firstly, the quantitative data elicited from the questionnaires and the vocabulary test statistically analysed. Secondly, it provides an overview of the qualitative data gathered from the interviews using the content analysis procedure.

Chapter 5 discusses the findings in this investigation attempting to answer the research questions formulated in chapter 3. Roughly speaking, it identifies the beliefs about vocabulary held by learners and teachers, the similarities and dissimilarities observed among them and the results obtained in the level test. It is also concerned with the VLSs employed.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Lastly, chapter 6 summarises the major conclusions rendered from this research and their possible implications. It also presents the study limitations and suggestions for further research.

Chapter 2

Literature review

Chapter 2

Literature review

The present chapter reviews the literature regarding vocabulary acquisition, language learning strategies, in general, and vocabulary learning strategies, in particular. First, definitions of the key concepts that constitute the theoretical framework for the current research are provided. Then, empirical studies on the topic under discussion are reviewed.

2.1. Vocabulary acquisition

In the last decades, the position of vocabulary acquisition has shifted from being a rather marginal aspect to an extremely important area in FL training. While traditional teaching methodologies, such as the Grammar-Translation method, the Audiolingual method or the Oral approach⁴ focused almost exclusively on the mastery of grammar, recent studies postulate the relevance of an adequate lexical command as a prerequisite to carry out communicative tasks in an efficient way (McCarthy, 1990; Cook, 1996; Schmitt, 1997; Nunan, 1999 or Meara, 2002, just to mention a few).

Going back to the concept of communicative competence (cf. chapter 1) developed by Canale and Swain (1980), Meara (1996) borrowed these scholars' ideas when they pointed out that the notion of grammatical concept also included the knowledge of lexical items, so lexical competence in FL teaching has not been

⁴ For further details about the mentioned teaching methods, see Richards and Rodgers (2001).

adequately formulated: “This is rather unfortunate: whichever way you look at it, lexical competence is at the heart of communicative competence” (1996: 35).

In keeping with this, Jiménez-Catalán (2002) mentions the importance of obtaining a definition of lexical competence, since there is no unanimity among scholars when referring to this competence: word knowledge, vocabulary knowledge, lexical knowledge or lexical competence are indiscriminately used.

Bearing in mind the complexity of defining lexical competence, the first attempt at enumerating the different aspects included in word knowledge was made by Richards:

- 1) *The native speaker of a language continues to expand his vocabulary in adulthood, whereas there is comparatively little development of syntax in adult life.*
- 2) *Knowing a word means knowing the degree of probability of encountering that word in speech or print. For many words we also know the sort of words most likely to be found associated with the word.*
- 3) *Knowing a word implies knowing the limitations imposed on the use of the word according to variations of function and situation.*
- 4) *Knowing a word means knowing the syntactic behavior associated with the word.*
- 5) *Knowing a word entails knowledge of the underlying form of a word and the derivations that can be made from it.*
- 6) *Knowing a word entails knowledge of the network of associations between that word and other words in the language.*
- 7) *Knowing a word means knowing the semantic value of a word.*
- 8) *Knowing a word means knowing many of the different meanings associated with a word.*

Figure 1: Aspects of word knowledge (Richards, 1976: 82)

According to Jiménez-Catalán (2002), researchers have developed Richards's concept of lexical knowledge around four basic strands: those trying to specify the aspects entailed in lexical competence (Faerch, Haastrup and Phillipson, 1984; Carter, 1987; Nation, 1990; Laufer, 1991), those not agreeing on the definition of lexical competence as a simple enumeration of different aspects (Meara, 1996), those trying to apply Richards's theoretical framework of lexical competence to vocabulary teaching (Schmitt, 1995) and, lastly, those empirical studies focusing on concrete features of lexical competence (Wesche and Paribakht, 1996; Schmitt and Meara, 1997).

One of the most elaborated theories is that formulated by Nation (2001). He distinguishes whether a word is learnt only receptively, or receptively and productively. Nation's explanation was adopted in the current study.

2.1.1. Definition of lexical competence

Nation stated that there are two types of knowledge entailing different mental processes: *receptive knowledge* and *productive knowledge*. In his own words,

Essentially, receptive vocabulary use involves perceiving the form of a word while listening or reading and retrieving its meaning. Productive vocabulary use involves wanting to express a meaning through speaking or writing and retrieving and producing the appropriate spoken or written word form. (2001: 24-25)

This distinction applies to every single aspect involved in word knowledge, namely, word form, meaning and use, as shown in the following table taken from Nation.

Chapter 2: Literature review

Table 1: What is involved in knowing a word?

Form	Spoken	R	What does the word sound like?
		P	How is the word pronounced?
	Written	R	What does the word look like?
		P	How is the word written and spelled?
	Word parts	R	What parts are recognisable in this word?
		P	What word parts are needed to express the meaning?
Form and meaning	R	What meaning does this word form signal?	
	P	What word form can be used to express this meaning?	
Meaning	Concept and referents	R	What is included in the concept?
		P	What items can the concept refer to?
	Associations	R	What other words does this make us think of?
		P	What other words could we use instead of this one?
Use	Grammatical functions	R	In what patterns does the word occur?
		P	In what patterns must we use this word?
	Collocations	R	What words or types of words occur with this one?
		P	What words or types of words must we use with this one?
Constraints on use (register, frequency...)	R	Where, when and how often would we expect to meet this word?	
	P	Where, when and how often can we use this word?	

Note: In column 3, R = Receptive knowledge, P = productive knowledge

(Source: Nation, 2001: 27)

As can be seen, knowing a word is not just a matter of meaning. On the contrary, it is an extremely complex process which involves the mastery of many word features. Since each of them demands a different kind of knowledge, Nation (2001) considers that some of these should be acquired implicitly, i.e. paying attention to them but without any further conscious step, whereas others ask for an explicit instruction.

As we shall see later on and although it is important to bear in mind the large number of lexical items that students should know (breadth of knowledge), Schmitt (1998) insisted that it is not only about vocabulary size but about

commanding all the aspects involved in knowing each word (depth of knowledge), especially in order to use them productively. Furthermore, this scholar argues that there are some aspects that learners acquire before others, that is, they learn in an incremental way. Indeed, the early learning stages are focused on establishing a link between form and meaning and then they gradually tackle other points.

With regard to word form, learners should be able to perceive a word when heard and to produce it orally with a correct pronunciation, stress and intonation. Besides, they are required to recognise a written term and to produce it with a correct spelling. Lastly, learners should be acquainted with the formation of new words using affixes as a means of increasing their lexical storage. Nation (2001) argues that once students' attention is focused on these aspects, they are implicitly learnt by coming across a word in different contexts.

As regards meaning, learners should be competent in establishing a link to the meaning of a word when read or heard and also in recalling the word form when trying to express a particular meaning. Moreover, words do not exist in isolation but in intricate connections with other terms. Thus, it is imperative for them to know the underlying concept behind a lexical item, being aware of the cultural differences between L1 and FL as well as the word lexical meaning (denotation) and inferential meaning based on context (connotation). In addition, learners should be conscious about the semantic networks in which the lexis of a language is organised, namely, "synonymy, hyponymy, meronymy, antonymy, troponymy, entailment [...] useful starting points for devising classification activities" (Nation, 2001: 55). This scholar acknowledges the depth of processing required to master

this concrete aspect of word knowledge and recommends its explicit teaching, providing a wide range of activities that will be covered later on.

Finally, word use entangles knowing the syntagmatic relations settled among terms based on what part of speech they are (nouns, verbs, adjectives...) as well as the collocational patterns of words that are usually used together (ready-made sentences). Implicit learning based on repeated encounters of terms is advocated by Nation (2001) to deal with this kind of knowledge. However, learners are also asked to master appropriate usage of lexical items in accordance with use limitations dependent on contextual factors and cross-cultural differences, which also asks for explicit instruction.

2.1.2. Setting learning goals

Once the concept of lexical competence has been defined, it seems vital to select which and how many words are needed to be learnt. Nation stated that educated native speakers of English command “around 20,000 word families” (2001: 9), understood as “headword, its inflected forms and its closely related derived forms” (2001: 8).

In this vein, EFL learners are required to know large figures of words to become proficient in English. Bearing this in mind, Nation (2001) divided lexis into three main categories: a small number of high-frequency words, specialised vocabulary and a large number of low-frequency words.

Considering that learners’ lexical competence should cover 95% of the words in texts (Laufer, 1992b) to gain a full understanding without difficulties, the

threshold of 3,000 most frequent word families is set as a learning goal (Nation, 1990).

In fact, Nation (2001) stated that this small group of high-frequency words constitutes much of the vocabulary contained in common oral and written texts. Therefore, it is logical to spend time on words that facilitate learners' better comprehension, which implies the knowledge of 2,000 high-frequency word families.

The high-frequency words in Nation's work (2001) were taken from West's General Service List (1953) but this professor argues that terms rated as highly frequent included in different lists coincide up to 80%. Hence, this is a starting point in vocabulary teaching. Furthermore, this scholar divided specialised vocabulary into two major subgroups: academic vocabulary and technical words. Both of them are proposed as a way of improving learners' lexical competence with words that suit their needs. The former are terms included in the Academic Word List (AWL), a compilation of 570 word families by Coxhead (2000) and addressed to learners taking academic studies because it deals with rather formal vocabulary. The latter consists of technical terms and high-frequency words with specialised meanings that depend on the field of study.

Lastly, low-frequency words form a large group of items that appear very infrequently and represent only a small percentage of the text (proper names, rather old-fashioned or extremely formal, vulgar, etc.). In short, vocabulary used "for social purposes, for occupations that do not require the reading of academic

text, or for reading novels and popular magazines” (Nation and Newton, 1997: 239).

In conclusion, depending on learners’ profile and needs, teachers should focus on different vocabulary and to this end, Nation’s word division proves to be extremely relevant.

2.1.3. Vocabulary learning

Several theories attempt to explain the mental process carried out in the acquisition of FL vocabulary. Fan (2003) advocates the model presented by Brown and Payne (1994), which divides the acquisition process into five main steps:

- a) having sources for encountering new words,*
- b) getting a clear image, either visual or auditory or both, of the forms of the new words,*
- c) learning the meaning of the words,*
- d) making a strong memory connection between the forms and the meaning of the words; and*
- e) using the words.*

On the other hand, Nation proposes a cognitive learning framework divided into three phases that is completely learner-centred:

1. Noticing: “giving attention to an item” (2001: 63). It is one of the basic premises to learn a word because if learners’ attention is not drawn towards it, the process cannot continue. Thus, a mismatch between learners’ and teachers’ interests will lead to poor academic performance.

Nation also explains that this process implies working with decontextualised words because, even if terms occur within a text, attention is drawn on the word as a language item and not on the message conveyed. In this sense, examples of decontextualisation that favour vocabulary learning are provided:

- The learner may come across a familiar word in listening or reading and realise that it is being used in a complete different way;
- The teacher may draw students' attention on a particular word by writing it on the blackboard;
- The learner may negotiate the meaning of a word in speaking; and
- The learner may focus on the meaning of a word by providing a definition, a synonym or L1 equivalent (2001: 64).

2. Retrieval: once noticing has directed the learner to learn the word, the second phase helps the anchoring of terms in the mind. Such a process may be receptive, i.e. "perceiving the form and having to retrieve its meaning when the word is met in listening or reading" and productive, understood as "wishing to communicate the meaning of the word and having to retrieve its spoken or written form as in speaking or writing" (Nation, 2001: 67).

What is more, the ability to retrieve already stored material is crucial in the FL learning process. Hence, it is sensible to gain understanding about how the human memory works. Gairns and Redman (1986) make a basic distinction: short-term memory and long-term memory. The first step consists in storing a small number of terms in the short-term memory, with limited capacity and afterwards in long-term memory, apparently able to hold any amount of information and recall it at will time after the original input.

Additionally, words are not stored in memory at random. Quite on the contrary, these scholars claimed that "our mental lexicon is highly organised and

efficient” (Gairns and Redman, 1986: 87) with lexical items stored in semantic sets and more frequently used words easier to recall.

In keeping with this, Nation (2001) suggests repeated encounters and the use of the word as a way to keep it in memory. Such repetitions should be increasingly spaced in order to avoid forgetting words and going back to the initial stage of the learning process.

Apart from repetition, this researcher also mentioned the “Depth of processing hypothesis”, formulated by Craik and Tulving (1975), which states that learners are likely to retrieve words from memory better if they engage in mental activities that require more elaborated and deep semantic processing, such as word association or picturing word meaning in the mind, rather than shallower procedures such as rote repetition.

3. Creative or generative use: This last stage of the learning process can be performed in a receptive way, i.e. “meeting a word which is used in new ways in listening and reading” or in a productive way, namely, “producing new ways of using the wanted vocabulary in new contexts” (2001: 69).

Thus, generative use moves along a continuum ranging from low generation (slightly different from the first time the word was met) to high generation (used in a completely different way). Nation goes a step further and stated that generative use of words results in more efficient learning than mere repetition.

In short, the vocabulary of a language is made up of terms that are intrinsically linked and learning them is a dynamic and complex process, since learners are

supposed not only to know these words and the relations established among them, but also to use them receptively and productively.

2.1.4. Vocabulary teaching

With the arrival of the learner-centred approach, one might think that teachers play a marginal role in the learning process but this is nothing further from reality.

Teachers are in charge of devising a systematic way of teaching, instead of resorting to concrete techniques (Laufer *et al.*, 2005)⁵. Therefore, when deciding about the lexical component that has to be covered in a school year, instructors can benefit greatly from the teaching principles outlined by Nation below:

Table 2: Principles of vocabulary learning

Content and sequencing
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use frequency and range of occurrence as ways of deciding what vocabulary to learn and the order in which to learn it.• Give adequate training in essential vocabulary learning strategies.• Give attention to each vocabulary item according to the learning burden of that item.• Provide opportunities to learn the various aspects of what is involved in knowing a word.• Avoid interference by presenting vocabulary in normal use rather than in groupings of synonyms, opposites, free associates or lexical items.• Deal with high-frequency vocabulary by focusing on the words themselves, and deal with low-frequency vocabulary by focusing on the control strategies.
Format and presentation
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make sure that high-frequency target vocabulary occurs in all the four strands of meaning-focused input, language-focused learning, meaning-focused output and fluency development.• Provide opportunity for spaced, repeated, generative retrieval of words to ensure cumulative growth.• Use depth-of-processing activities.
Monitoring and assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Test learners to see what vocabulary they need to focus on.• Use monitoring and assessment to keep learners motivated.• Encourage and help learners to reflect on their learning.

(Source: Nation, 2001: 385)

⁵ Paul Nation is among those scholars who have contributed most to facilitate the work of FL teachers. This section is mainly based on his research because it sheds light on every single aspect involved in the process of vocabulary acquisition. Every direction he mentions is supported by an exhaustive review of previous research. Thus, many of the examples and directions provided here are the result of his advice (Nation, 2001).

The first decision a teacher has to make is the selection of the appropriate vocabulary to be taught. As explained above (cf. section 2.1.1), many scholars recommend at initial stages to focus on the most frequent 2.000 lexical items (Meara, 1995; Schmitt, 2000; Nation, 2001). The next learning stages, which require learners to cope with authentic materials in the TL, demand from 3,000 to 5,000 word families. At university levels, though, Hulstijn *et al.* (1996) argued that learners are required to master around 10,000 to 11,000 word families in order to complete communicative tasks, where high-frequency words should be supplemented by specific vocabulary of the concrete subject area.

According to Laufer *et al.* (2005), high-frequency words and low-frequency words deserve quite different amounts of attention by the teachers. Rich instruction entailing focus on the word and the assimilation of its different aspects should be applied to high-frequency and specially needed terms because they are a relatively small number of words indispensable for learners and deserve much attention; this should be done in combination with the so-called four skills, both receptively (reading, listening) and productively (writing and speaking). Conversely, the large group of low-frequency words are scarcely employed so they should be implicitly taught, instead.

Thus, both teaching approaches, explicit and implicit or incidental are complementary and necessary. Words taught explicitly need extensive exposure to oral and written texts in order both to be consolidated and to cover all the different aspects of word knowledge. Furthermore, words picked up incidentally

are very unlikely to be mastered at a productive level if they are not given further attention (Schmitt, 2000).

2.1.4.1. Teaching high-frequency words

When dealing with high-frequency words, pre-selected vocabulary items should be presented in a way that may draw students' attention and interest. Thus, teaching activities that encourage students' noticing of terms include pre-teaching certain terms before dealing with a particular context, putting words under the spotlight by highlighting them (underlining, italics, bold letters...) or glossing texts.

As for the activities that involve the consolidation of already learnt terms, retrieval exercises are mainly based on repeated listening and reading of texts that include known items, as well as communicative activities that ask students to employ familiar words in concrete situations, similar to those where the word was previously encountered. Generative use tasks involve the receptive exposure to longer texts where words are used in a different way and activities that require students to express something in their own words.

A brief account of tasks aimed at dealing with each of the word knowledge aspects is provided below (Nation, 2001; Pavičić, 2008):

→ **Word form:**

Learners may be trained to recognise spoken and written words, as well as the parts that form their structure. They should also be able to pronounce and write them correctly.

- ✓ Verbal form: oral drills where teachers pronounce words and learners repeat them (chorally or individually), getting feedback. Students may also

be asked to read aloud or be trained in the phonetic transcription of concrete items.

- ✓ Written form: focus on word spelling system, outlining the similarities and differences between L1 and FL systems so as to find spelling rules. Teachers can draw students' attention by writing words on the board, underlining or highlighting them. Then, learners could be asked to write the words they hear or spell them out.
- ✓ Word parts: after learners have acquired some complex words, it is advisable to make them aware that these words contain affixes, which can be used in varied terms and may cause changes of written and spoken words. The knowledge of common prefixes and suffixes can be useful information to understand word meaning and to produce lexical items combining stems and suitable affixes. Teaching activities include dividing words into parts, filling word charts according to the grammatical category or building new words using concrete affixes.

→ **Word meaning**

Understanding the notion expressed by a particular word asks for a strong explicit instruction in several ways:

- ✓ Connecting form-meaning: students should be able to connect a particular form with a particular meaning. Good ways of doing so are matching definitions to words, discussing the meaning of phrases including the desired terms, drawings, pictures or *realia* that have to be labelled, peer activities where students teach each other the meaning of particular lexical

items or employing riddles to remember word definitions, as in “It has a head but it cannot think = match” (Nation, 2001: 101).

- ✓ Concept and referent: it is essential for learners to gain insight into the underlying meaning of a term and its particular uses, especially in order to be able both to understand it in different instances of use and to employ it in a varied range of situations. In groups, learners can be asked to examine different contexts where a particular word is employed and find out differences and similarities in use. They may also be offered a range of possible dictionary meanings for a word that is embedded in a concrete context and have to choose the correct one. They may be required to look for information about specific terms and report it to the whole class. Moreover, advanced students can be asked to refine their word knowledge learning to grasp nuances of meaning among words, such as in the example provided below:

Table 3: Semantic feature analysis

	Because unexpected	Because difficult to believe	So as to cause confusion	So as to leave one helpless to act or think
Surprise	✓			
Astonish		✓		
Amaze			✓	
Astound				✓
Flabbergast				✓

(Source: Rudzka et al. 1981: 65)

- ✓ Associations: fostering students’ awareness of the meaning links established among words is very important to reinforce their anchorage in the mental lexicon. Exercises asking students to find synonyms, antonyms

superordinate and subordinate words are highly recommended. Moreover, activities that entail semantic elaboration at a deep level of processing, such as ordering or classifying words, drawing semantic maps, grids or diagrams, relating words in cause-effect, etc., may also be adequate.

→ **Word use:** Finally, learners should be able to use all the vocabulary acquired in a manner that suits the communicative situation and this involves the mastery of the following features:

- ✓ Grammatical functions: students are required to embed words into sentences to express the desired meaning without grammar mistakes. Activities that encompass the ordering of the elements of a sentence or the matching of sentences divided into halves are examples of good practice.
- ✓ Collocational issues: Apart from grammar, students need to expand their word knowledge by getting acquainted with the items they collocate with as a way of improving fluency. Looking in dictionaries or corpora for collocations or matching words used as a group can be a useful and interesting exercise.
- ✓ Constraints on use: The use of certain words may be limited or conditioned by factors, such as cultural background, register and word frequency. It is advisable to teach students how to recognise and classify them, for instance, contrasting British and American English terms.

2.1.4.2. Teaching low-frequency words

As mentioned above, the 2,000 most frequent words of a FL should be taught in an explicit way, spending enough time for their efficient assimilation. When

learners master these items, it is time to start increasing their lexical command by acquiring less frequently used words.

While also assuming that at higher levels vocabulary instruction should be provided, learners should become autonomous in lexical acquisition and it is in this context that VLSs gain prominence. Such strategies, which will be dealt with later, provide a good way to learn more specialised and, consequently, more uncommon terms.

Since they form a huge group of lexical items, it is absolutely impossible to cover them in class. Students' autonomy allows them both to fill this gap and to somehow determine what vocabulary to focus on outside the classroom according to their interests and needs. Therefore, instead of spending class time on concrete low-frequency words, teachers should strive to provide good training in the use of VLSs.

In this light, research has also proven that reading can be an effective way of vocabulary learning (Coady, 1997; Nation and Waring, 1997; Schmitt, 2000). The latter asserts that extensive reading should be carefully planned taking into account the following characteristics:

- Texts must be appropriate to students' proficiency level so that difficulty increases gradually. Reading has to be challenging enough but not too much in order to avoid learners' frustration (they have to master 98% of words).
- Reading must be continuously done to be effective.

- Students should be encouraged to perform oral presentations or debates about the books they read.
- Students' interest must be persistently fostered, so they should be allowed to choose their readings in order avoid boredom.

In sum, extensive reading combined with conscious and skilfully employment of VLSs may enable learners to expand their lexical knowledge up to 11.000 word families, a far from negligible learning goal.

2.1.4.3. Assessment

Like in any other area of learning, monitoring the acquisition process becomes a crucial procedure. Once the vocabulary to focus on has been selected, it is important to assess not only the learning outcomes but also the learning process itself.

A continuous and systematic assessment can be accomplished by monitoring and correcting classroom activities, such as conversations, vocabulary games, etc. Furthermore, ongoing tests to measure lexical knowledge may be conducted but it is extremely difficult to design a test that can check each and every single aspect that makes up word knowledge (Schmitt, 2000; Nation, 2001; Segler *et al.*, 2002). Therefore, teachers have to devise carefully an assessment tool bearing in mind the type and depth of knowledge, the time available and the elements to be included. Vocabulary tests are supposed to include many items (at least 30) in order to be considered as reliable (Nation, 2001).

Some tests can be used to assign each student a proficiency level or to measure total vocabulary size. Teachers could take advantage of the VLT

employed in the current study in order to determine students' proficiency level at the beginning of the academic year before setting learning goals. In addition, specific tests can be regularly performed to monitor the progress made by learners throughout the training period. Nevertheless, assessing results is not all that matters. Teachers should promote students' active participation and responsibility in the learning process, so they are encouraged to assess learners' ability to employ learning strategies effectively and to monitor metacognitive behaviours that reinforce personal autonomy.

2.2. Language Learning Strategies (LLS)

Understanding the concept of VLS requires a prior acknowledgment of the concept of Language Learning Strategy (LLS) in general. This section will provide an introduction to the issue in terms of origin, definition, classification, identification of factors affecting its use and previous research on LLS.

2.2.1. Theoretical background

The interest in learning strategies can be traced back to the seventies with the emergence of the so-called cognitive revolution in psychology. The cognitive theory of learning studies the mental processes involved in the learning process. Applied to L2/FL acquisition, it seeks to investigate how linguistic knowledge is stored into memory and how it becomes automatic both in receptive and productive procedures. What is more, it deals with linguistic learning exactly in the same way as any other kind of complex knowledge. Thus, the cognitive approach shifted the focus of attention, previously placed on the learning process,

to the learner that faces the process. It advocates that each individual constructs their own reality so individual differences gain enormous significance.

In spite of the sharp criticism levelled at this approach because it dismissed the influence of linguistic factors in L2/FL acquisition, the aforementioned method meant a disruption with respect to previous systems in emphasising the role of the learner in the acquisition process (Pavičić, 2008).

Several models of L2 acquisition have been proposed since then. Among them, Skehan (1998: 268) designed a cognitive learning model based on four cornerstones that make up individual differences, as reflected in the figure below:

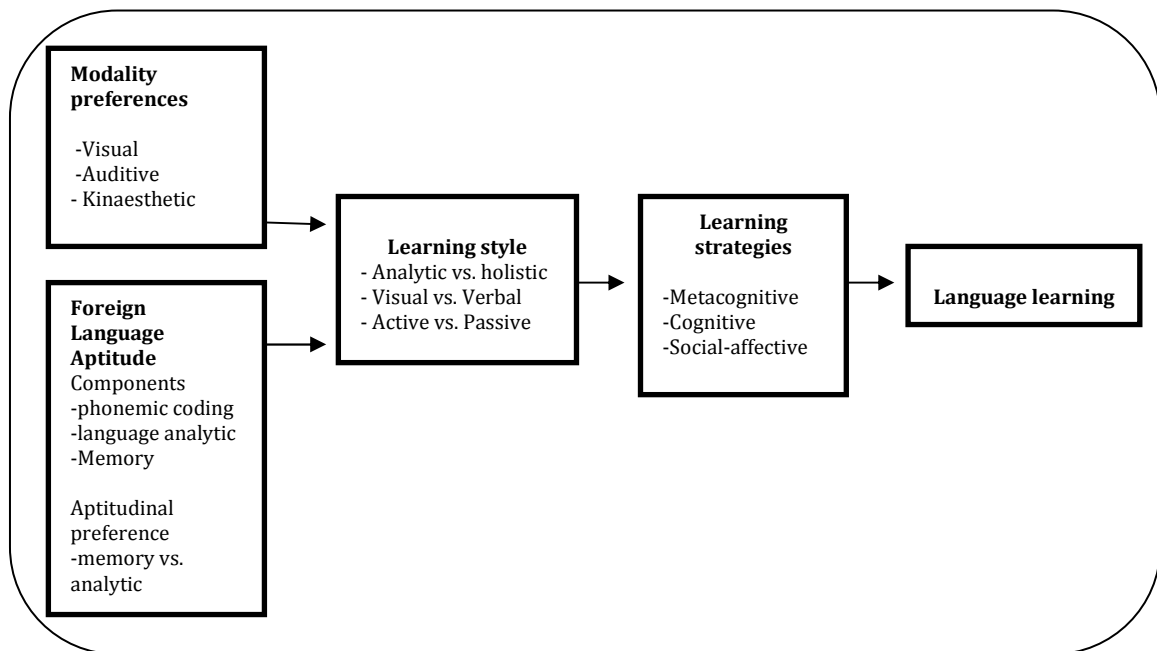


Figure 2: Individual differences in language learning

The four main individual differences pointed by Skehan (1998) are:

1. *Modality preference* refers to the input channel that better suits learners' predilection: visual, auditory or kinaesthetic (involving movement).

2. *FL aptitude* is determined by skills in *phonemic coding* (ability to process auditory input), language analytic (i.e. “the capacity to infer rules of language and make linguistic generalizations and extrapolations” [1998: 207]) and *memory* (information storage and retrieval). Hence, some students focus on analysing the language system, while others depend more on their memory capacity.

3. *Learning style* is seen as a tendency to process information in a certain way. Individuals are considered to be either holistic (regarding a situation as a whole) or analytic (regarding a situation as analysable into parts); either visual (preferring information presented visually, namely, pictures, colours...) or verbal (opting for information presented both orally or written); either active (committing to the learning process, self-directed) or passive (not interacting but expecting).

Skehan argues that both modality preferences and FL aptitude are really hard to change, whereas learning styles are much more flexible because each individual possesses a range of styles. Finally, language learning strategies are completely manageable and are said to allow for training.

The applied linguist, Rod Ellis, has also been a reference point in any study of SLA. For the purpose of the current study, Ellis’ (1994: 530) L2 acquisition model represented in Figure 3 will be considered:

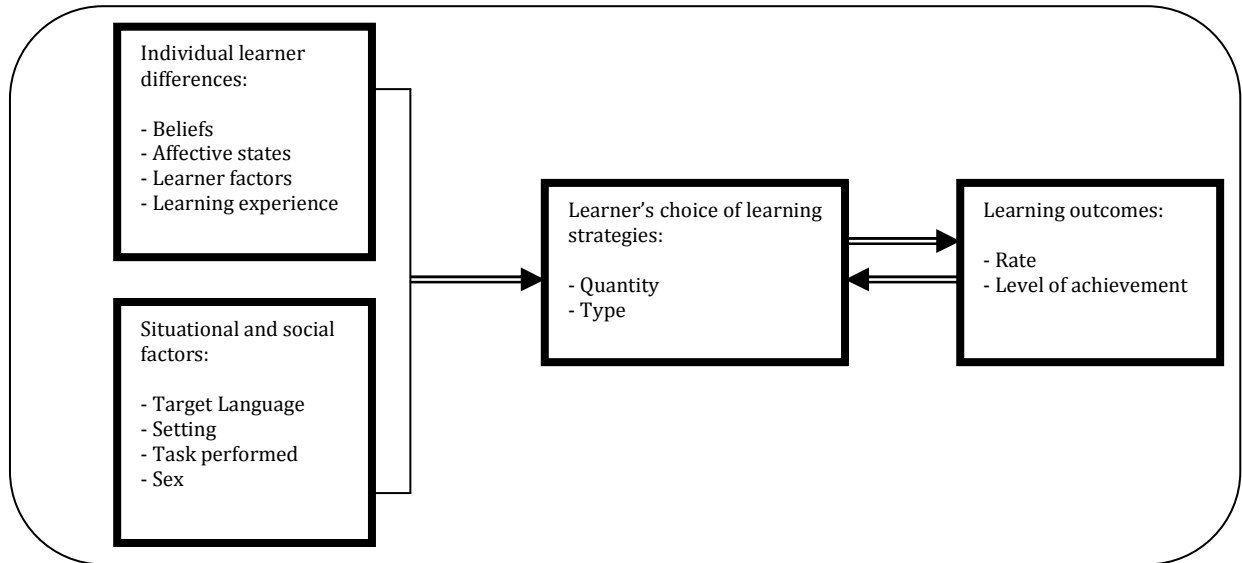


Figure 3: The relationship between individual learner differences, situational factors, learning strategies and learning outcomes

As can be seen, Ellis' tripartite model presents learning strategies as a conciliator element between individual differences and social factors, on the one hand, and learning outcomes, on the other hand. These factors influence the use of LLSs, which, in turn, determine the rate and level of achievement of learning achievement.

Ellis' theoretical framework will be the basis to support the account of the factors that influence the use of LLSs, which will be discussed later in this study (cf. section 2.2.4, page 47).

2.2.2. Defining a LLS

Interest in the study of LLSs can be traced back to the research conducted by Joan Rubin (1975) to identify the steps taken by those students with greater success in FL acquisition.

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This investigation shed light on the difficulty of identifying the strategies employed by learners because many of them are mental and, therefore, unobservable. However, through observation and self-reports she was able to discover the seven characteristics of the “good” language learner.

Similarly Stern (1975) also attempted to identify the strategies used by good language learners gathering the conclusions presented in the table below:

Table 4: Rubin’s and Stern’s characteristics of “good” language learners

Rubin	Stern
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Willing and accurate guesser• Strong drive to communicate• Uninhibited• Attends to form• Practices-seeks out conversations• Monitors own speech and the speech of others• Attends to meaning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A personal learning style or positive learning strategies• An active approach to the learning task• A tolerant and outgoing approach to the target language and empathy with its speakers• Technical know-how about how to tackle a language• Strategies of experimentation and planning• Constantly searching for meaning• Willingness to practice• Willingness to use the language in real communication• Self-monitoring and critical sensitivity• Developing the target language more and more as a separate reference system.

(Source: Brown, 1987:92)

Furthermore, Naiman *et al.* (1978: 13-15) tried to relate some personality traits to concrete cognitive styles and the strategies that led to successful learning.

Their study resulted in five major strategies as important to learner success:

1. *an active task approach.*
2. *a realisation of language as a system.*
3. *a realisation that language is for communication.*
4. *the ability to manage affective demands.*
5. *the monitoring of one's performance in a second language (L2).*

Affective factors proved to be extremely important in learning outcomes and they also could confirm their hypotheses that good and poor learners resort to

quite different mental strategies. In short, these early studies constituted the basis for further research on LLS and made it clear the need for students to come to terms with their own responsibility in the learning process.

All the same, the concept of LLS remains far from consensus and three main points of controversy can be pointed out: the relationship between learning strategies and other related terms, the definition of LLS and the classification of LLS.

The first disagreement arose over the work of Rubin and her definition of learning strategy as “the techniques or devices which a learner may use to acquire knowledge” (1975: 43). Within this broad definition, Rubin incorporated strategies that directly contribute to learning and those that contribute in an indirect way, including the latter communication strategies. However, many scholars were not happy with this definition. Brown believes that learning is part of the stage of input assimilation while communicating is part of the output. What is more, he argued that communicative strategies employed to overcome limitations, such as topic avoidance or message abandonment do not lead to learning. All in all, he also admitted that “in the arena of linguistic interaction, it is sometimes difficult.....to distinguish between the two” (1994: 118).

The same idea was shared by Rod Ellis (1994) and Andrew Cohen (1998). They classify LLSs and language use strategies as two different set of strategies belonging to a superordinate category known as *L2 learner strategies*.

Elaine Tarone (1981) believes, however, that helping students to communicate can help them improve their L2 command. Therefore a communication strategy

can also be a learning strategy. Thus, deciding whether they are communication or learning strategies depends exclusively on the learner's intention, so "the relationship of learning strategies to communication strategies is somewhat problematic" (Tarone, 1981: 290). This consideration makes it extremely hard to conclude whether Rubin's inclusion of communication strategies in the group of learning strategies was right or wrong.

The second problem lies in the fact that there is not a single concept of LLS yet, as shown in table 5 containing the main definitions provided during decades of research. However, there is a noticeable progression in the definitions from an absolute emphasis on identifying behaviours that lead to successful learning to a description of what learners think and do throughout the learning process.

Leaving aside the controversy arisen from the interpretation of the different definitions, namely, whether they are behavioural or mental, and whether they are conscious and intentional or subconscious, Rebecca Oxford's notion of LLS is one of the most widely cited and applied to research and the same will be done in the present dissertation study.

When she mentions LLSs as "specific actions taken by the learners to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations" (Oxford, 1990: 8), she emphasises learners' determination to attain learning goals in an autonomous way and LLSs facilitate and make the process more pleasant.

Table 5: Definition of LLS. An overview

Source	Definition
Bialystok (1978: 76)	Methods or conscious enterprise for exploiting available information to improve competence in a second language.
Tarone (1980: 419)	An attempt to develop linguistic and sociolinguistic competence in the TL.
Weinstein and Mayer (1986: 315)	Behaviours and thoughts that a learner engages in during learning that are intended to influence the learners' encoding process.
Rubin (1987: 19)	LLS are set of operations, steps, plans and routines of what learners do to facilitate the obtaining, storage, retrieval and use of information, to regulate learning.
Chamot (1987: 71)	Techniques, approaches or deliberate actions that students take in order to facilitate learning, recall of both linguistic and content information.
Oxford (1990: 8)	Behaviours or actions which learners use to make language learning more successful, self-directed and enjoyable.
Ellis (1994: 529)	Mental or behavioural activity related to some specific stage in the process of language acquisition of language use
Cohen (1998: 4)	Processes which are consciously selected by learners and which may result in action taken to enhance the learning or use of a L2, through the storage, recall and application of information about that language.
Purpura (1999: 8)	Conscious or unconscious techniques or activities that an individual invokes in language learning, use or testing.

(Source: adapted from Pavičić, 2008: 51)

Furthermore, for a better understanding of this concept, Oxford (1990: 8) provides the main characteristics of LLSs:

1. "Contribute to the main goal, communicative competence" because they help learners to participate actively in communication, providing self-assurance and hence interaction with other people.

2. "Allow learners to become more self-directed", changing students' passive attitudes into active ones, which results in greater confidence and proficiency outside the classroom.

3. “Expand the role of teachers” and then the teacher’s authoritative figure becomes a helping and adviser one.

4. “Are problem-oriented”, that is, they are tools used to solve a specific problem or to accomplish a task.

5. “Are specific actions taken by the learners”, such as taking notes, self-evaluating or planning, in order to enhance their own learning.

6. “Involve many aspects of the learner, not just the cognitive”, so metacognitive, social and affective aspects are also involved.

7. “Support learning both directly and indirectly”, since there are direct strategies, involving manipulation and use of the language, and indirect strategies contributing indirectly to learning, such as metacognitive and social/affective ones.

8. “Are not always observable”, because steps such as co-operation can be easily observed but those strategies involving mental operations cannot be seen. Indeed, according to Purpura (1999), the fact that these strategies cannot be observed does not mean that they do not respond to mental processes.

9. “Are often conscious”, that is, done on purpose by the learner. However, some of them may become automatic and thus subconscious after certain amount of practice.

10. “Can be taught”, that is, strategy training is possible, as we will see later.

11. “Are flexible”, so they are not always found in a predictable sequence or pattern. On the contrary, each learner differs in the way of choosing, combining and sequencing strategies.

12. “Are influenced by a variety of factors”, such as learner individual differences or situational and social factors.

2.2.3. Classification

The third problem faced by research on the field is that scholars have not reached a consensus on the classification of LLSs. This has been motivated by the lack of agreement among researchers on the concept of LLS.

Oxford (1994) analysed the main taxonomies available and concluded that all of them fall into five broad categories:

- i. Systems related to successful language learners: Early studies (Naiman *et al.*, 1978; Rubin, 1975) focused on compiling strategies employed by “good” language learners.
- ii. Systems based on psychological functions, namely, cognitive, metacognitive and affective (Wong-Fillmore, 1979; Wenden, 1986; O'Malley and Chamot, 1990).
- iii. Linguistically based systems dealing with guessing, language monitoring, formal and functional practice (Bialystok, 1978) or with communication strategies (Tarone, 1981). Thus, Bialystok divided LLSs into four main categories: formal language practicing (knowledge of grammatical and syntactical items), functional practicing (for authentic communication goals), monitoring and inferencing. Moreover, Tarone focused on the strategies employed by students in order to communicate, such as paraphrasing or borrowing.

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iv. Systems related to separate language skills, such as vocabulary learning (Cohen, 1998).

v. Systems based on different styles or types of learners (Sutter, 1989)

Table 6: A comparison of strategy classification model

Study	Strategy	Description
Rubin (1975)	Direct strategies	Clarifying, memorising, guessing, inductive inferencing, deductive reasoning.
	Indirect strategies	Creating opportunities for practice, using production tricks, using synonyms.
Bialystok (1978)	Formal practicing	Gaining knowledge about language by practicing with language rules.
	Functional practicing	Using the language for authentic communication purposes.
	Monitoring strategies	Examining and modifying or correcting linguistic output.
	Inferencing strategies	Guessing a previously unknown meaning or form.
Wong-Fillmore (1979)	Social strategies	Interacting with peers in learning, asking for help.
	Cognitive strategies	Assuming what people say, looking for patterns of the target language.
O'Malley and Chamot Stewner-Manzanares, Russo, and Küpper (1985a)	Cognitive strategies	Performing information processing.
	Metacognitive Strategies	Regulating language learning and including high order. executive skills or function.
	Socioaffective Strategies	Interacting with others in learning and using. Mental control to reduce learning anxiety.
Wenden (1987)	Cognitive strategies	Selecting, comprehending, storing and retrieving input.
	Self-management strategies	Planning, monitoring and evaluating.
Oxford (1990)	Direct Strategies	
	Memory	Storing and retrieving new information.
	Cognitive	Manipulating and transforming the target language.
	Compensation	Filling in the gaps or missing knowledge of the target language.
	Indirect Strategies	
	Metacognitive	Controlling cognitive process in learning, managing, or regulating language learning.
	Affective	Controlling emotions and feelings to lower learning anxiety.
Social	Interacting and cooperating with others in learning.	

(Source: adapted from Hong, 2006: 31)

All in all, the two most influential classifications in LLS research are those presented by O' Malley *et al.* (1985a) and Oxford (1990), which will be covered in turn.

O'Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzanares, Küpper and Russo (1985a) conducted a study to determine the range and frequency of LLSs employed by ESL students. Simultaneously, they sought to discover what strategies were used in specific tasks and whether students exhibiting different language proficiency differed in their use and choice of LLSs.

The LLSs discovered were then subcategorised into three broad groups: *metacognitive*, *cognitive* and *social mediation*. Moreover, they succeeded in linking the use of strategies to certain tasks (mainly in pronunciation and vocabulary learning) and they also demonstrated that students' level of FL competence has a direct impact on the use of LLSs.

Thus, metacognitive strategies entailed learners' acknowledgement of their own cognitive processes when planning, self-monitoring and self-evaluating. Cognitive strategies involved direct manipulation of information when performing learning tasks, such as in note-taking, repetition, deduction or resourcing. Lastly, social mediation referred to those LLSs used to interact with other speakers, for instance, when seeking for cooperation and asking for clarification. This study was extremely important for it laid the foundation for subsequent research, such as Oxford's.

Rebecca Oxford (1990) took O'Malley et al.'s distribution as point of reference but expanded it to six categories of LLSs: memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective and social. What is more, these categories make up the

so-called *Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL)*⁶ and are further divided into two major groups (previously identified by Rubin, 1987): direct and indirect strategies.

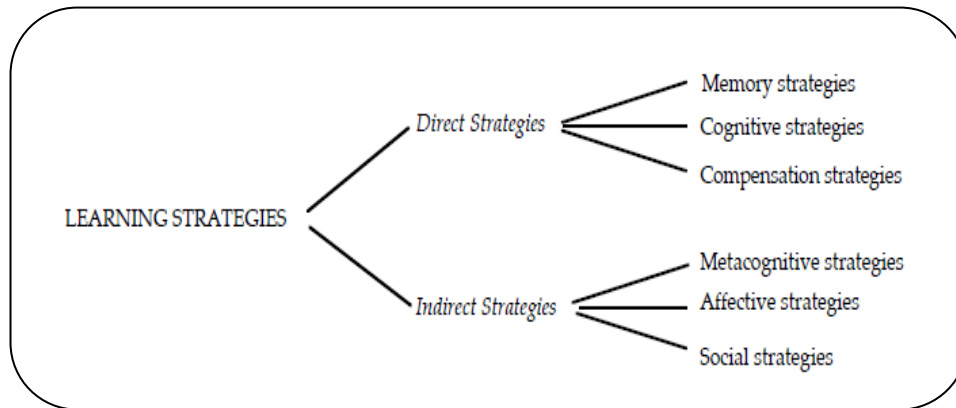


Figure 4: Diagram of the strategy system: Overview (Source: Oxford, 1990: 16)

Direct strategies are “strategies that directly involve the target language” since they “require mental processing of the language” (Oxford, 1990: 37). Three direct strategies were identified:

- a. Memory strategies, used to store new information and retrieve it when needed.
- b. Cognitive strategies, which enable learners to create links between new information and previous knowledge. They involve direct analysis and transformation of the TL.
- c. Compensation strategies, employed to overcome difficulties in using the TL despite lacking required knowledge.⁷

⁶ A research instrument that has been adapted to carry out the current study (cf. Chapter 3)

⁷ As previously stated, this is rather controversial since many researchers refer to them as communication strategies and, therefore, not included under the heading of LLS (Ellis, 1994; Cohen, 1998)

Indirect strategies “provide indirect support for language learning through focusing, planning, evaluating, seeking opportunities, controlling anxiety, increasing co-operation, and empathy and other means” (Oxford, 1990: 151).

Three indirect strategies were also designated:

- d. Metacognitive strategies, referring to students’ management of their own learning.
- e. Affective strategies, employed to take control of emotions and attitudes.
- f. Social strategies, dealing with the interaction with others in order to learn.

Oxford offers a huge amount of strategies subcategorised into each of the categories presented above (an outline provided in Figure 5).

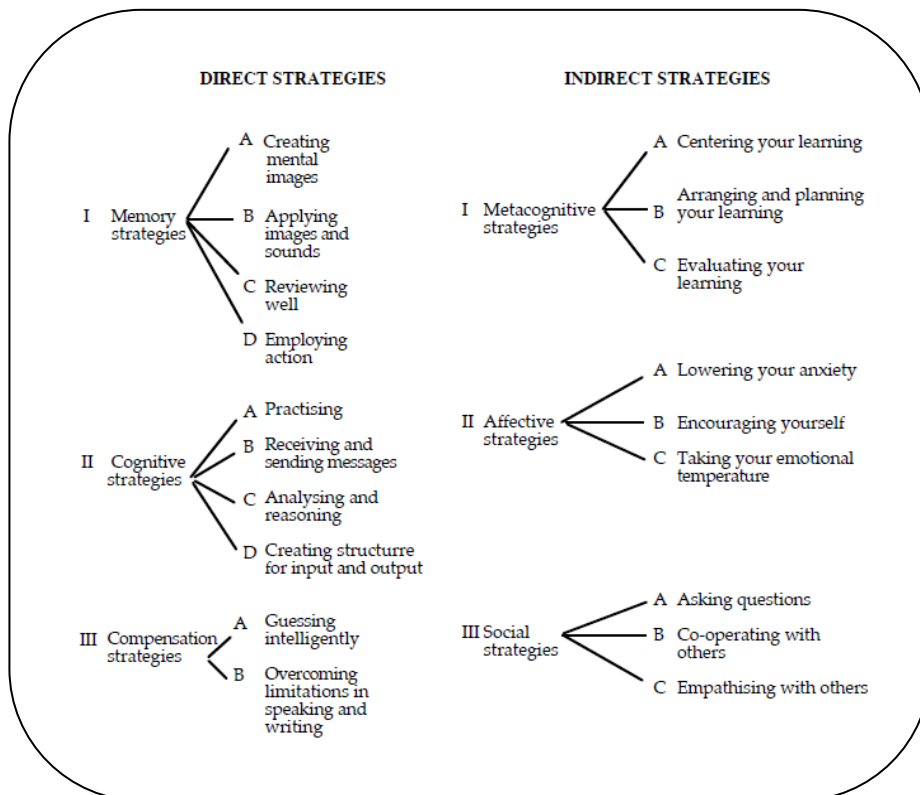


Figure 5: Diagram of the strategy system showing two classes, six groups and 19 sets (Source: Oxford, 1990: 17)

According to Ellis (1994: 539), Oxford's taxonomy is "perhaps the most comprehensive classification of learning strategies to date" and yet the researcher herself acknowledges that her work "is not the final word on LLS" (Oxford, 1990: 263), for there may be some overlap between categories (LLSs versus communication strategies).

All things considered, given the relevance of the investigation conducted by Oxford and the influence of her work on the field, the current study is based on the classification provided by this scholar.

2.2.4. Factors affecting learners' use of LLSs

Oxford and Nyikos (1989) pointed to several factors that accounted for the choice and use of LLSs, namely, motivation, gender, learners' origin, attitudes and beliefs, task, age and learning stage, learning style and tolerance of ambiguity. Research has shown that motivation, proficiency in the FL, learning style and gender are among those variables that have the strongest effect on learners' use of different types of strategies. They will be presented in turn.

2.2.4.1. Motivation

After years of research scholars have concluded that motivation is one of the factors that affects most the learning process. Indeed, Dörnyei argues that

motivation provides the primary impetus to initiate learning the L2 and later the driving force to sustain the long and often tedious learning process; indeed, all the others factors involved in L2 acquisition presuppose motivation to some extent. (1998: 117)

Nevertheless, the same scholar emphasises the lack of consensus in what motivation is. Up to the nineties, the work of Gardner, Lambert, and MacIntyre

in social psychology was the milestone of motivational theories. However, the cognitive revolution introduced cognitive factors to the research on motivation, which was then considered a complex construct of cognitive, social and emotional factors (Dörnyei, 1998).

The work of Robert Gardner has been crucial in the field, both for its findings and methodology. He distinguished between integrative motivation, “a sincere and personal interest in the people and culture represented by the other language group” and instrumental orientation, meaning “the practical value and advantages of learning a new language” (Gardner and Lambert, 1972: 132). Thus, success in FL learning should be intimately linked to integrative orientation but further research demonstrated just the opposite (Gardner and MacIntyre, 1991)

Nowadays, one of the leading researchers in the field of motivation is Zoltán Dörnyei, whose cognitive model established three different aspects involved in L2 motivation, as reflected in Figure 6:

- a. Language level deals with integrative (interest in FL culture and community) and instrumental motivation (usefulness of FL for future goals)
- b. Learner level consists of individuals’ characteristics (self-confidence and need to learn the FL)
- c. Learning situation level refers to the learner’s specific course, teacher and group interaction.

In 1990, results from a study carried out in Hungary by this scholar indicated that the lower the proficiency level, the greater incidence of instrumental

motivation (purpose) and the desire to achieve goals, while the higher the proficiency level the more relevant integrative motivation becomes.

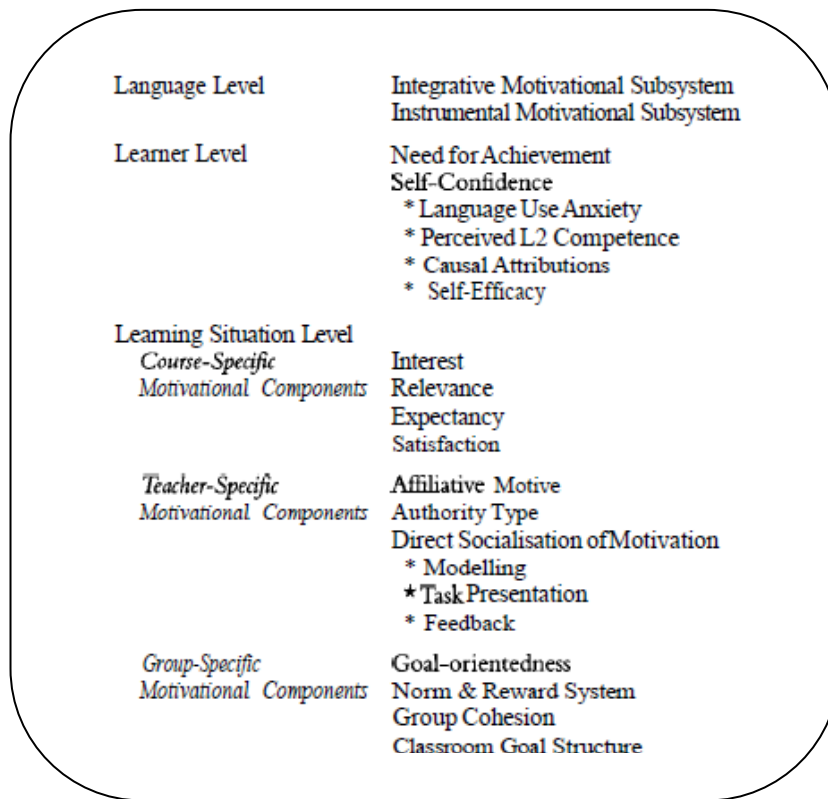


Figure 6: Components of FL motivation (Dörnyei, 1998: 125).

Motivation in L2 has been a matter of investigation in recent years, although little has been done to establish the relationship between motivation and LLSs. Much research has focused on studying whether more motivated students tended to use more strategies than less motivated ones.

In a study carried out in the US, Oxford and Nyikos (1989) found that highly motivated learners employed a greater amount of LLSs than those poorly motivated. Moreover, if their goal was obtaining good grades, they resorted more

to formal practice and left aside strategies entailing a communicative use of the language. Thus, students' goals are also related to strategy choice.

The same results were obtained in a survey conducted by Liao (2004) in Taiwan, where the low level of motivation was significantly correlated to the low use of LLSs. Likewise, Schmidt and Watanabe (2001) investigated the correlation between motivational features and LLS use of university students in Hawai'i and they reached the conclusion that more motivated students reported higher strategic employment. The strength of their study lies in the fact that they were able to discover that motivation does not affect equally all strategy categories: the use of cognitive and metacognitive VLSs was highly influenced by motivation whereas social strategies were less likely to be altered.

As will be seen (cf. chapter 3), motivational factors are also taken into account in the current study both in questionnaires and in interviews so as to confirm (or not) prior findings.

2.2.4.2. Gender

Prior research has demonstrated that gender is a variable that influences the use and choice of LLSs, with most studies reporting a significantly higher use by females than males.

One of the earliest studies on the topic was that of Politzer (1983), who surveyed the LLSs used by university students by means of self-reported questionnaires. He concluded that females were much more prone to using social strategies than males. In line with this, Ehrman and Oxford's (1989) study

reported greater overall employment of strategies by females than males. They could also discern a tendency of higher use of social strategies by women.

The same could be applied to Oxford and Nyikos's (1989) investigation of university students learning different FLs in the USA. Once again, women outnumbered men in the overall use of strategies and in specific categories, such as formal practice (language analysis), self-management and social strategies when engaged in authentic use of the language (asking for clarification, requesting lower speech...).

A few years later, Green and Oxford (1995) in a survey carried out with students taking three different course levels at the University of Puerto Rico confirmed a greater LLS use by women than by men.

Several categories showed the gender gap, with women resorting much more frequently to strategies of memory, cognitive, social and affective strategies. However, they were cautious in interpreting their findings when arguing that more research on the sex factor incidence over the use of LLS and language achievements was needed.

Roughly speaking, all these studies state that women use strategies with a higher frequency rate than men and that they seem to differ in their choice of LLSs. Yet, this has not always been the case: other surveys reported more LLSs being employed by male subjects.

Tran (1988) interviewed adult Vietnamese immigrants in the USA and concluded that males were more prone to using LLSs, such as holding conversations with Americans or watching TV and listening to the radio in English.

A similar conclusion was drawn in a study conducted by Wharton (2000) on LLS use of bilingual students in Singapore. Men outperformed women on the employment of memory, metacognitive and cognitive; however, these differences were justified by prior language learning experience rather than by gender differences.

More recently, Tercanliouglu (2004) investigated the LLSs used by pre-service EFL teachers in Turkey and found that men exceeded women in strategy use in each of the LLSs categories included in the SILL, except affective strategies. The researcher explained that the poor use of LLSs reported by women might be due to the fact that in a male-dominated society like the Turkish one, females have lower self-esteem and they may rate their strategy use lower than men did.

In sum, although most studies suggest a greater use of strategies by female learners the inconsistency in the results does not allow to draw a definitive conclusion. The current study will attempt to shed some light on the correlation between gender and strategy use in the Galician context.

2.2.4.3. Cultural background

Individuals' origin or ethnicity and cultural background seem to have a say in the LLSs they choose. Politzer and McGroarty (1985) were among the first to investigate, whose research of Asian and Hispanic ESL students' strategy use discovered that Hispanic learners were more reliant on strategies than their Asian counterparts, especially on communication type strategies. Yet the competence scores obtained by the latter were higher than those of Latin origin, so scholars

argued that some strategies might be more effective for concrete L1 background students.

In 1987 O' Malley stated a relationship between strategy preference and students' cultural background based on the results elicited from a well-known study with students from the same origins as those of the previous study. A survey with two experimental (Asian and Hispanic) and two control groups was carried out. The two experimental groups were trained in LLS use, where Hispanics were eager to learn new strategies but the Asians were reluctant to use grouping and imagery strategies to learn vocabulary. The results obtained were striking: the experimental group of Hispanics outperformed the control group on the post-test. Conversely, the control group of Asians relying on rote memorisation strategies obtained better scores than the experimental one. This means that cultural background seems to be an influential factor on LLSs but, since the present study is only concerned with Galician students, it is impossible to take this variable into account.

2.2.4.4. Type of task

According to Gu (2005: 15), "a learning task can be as broad as mastering a second language or as specific as remembering one meaning of a word". Learners are said to possess a repertoire of strategies, so when facing a specific learning task they decide what strategies are to be employed taking into account the specific learning goals targets set in advance.

The current investigation aims to determine the range of strategies that students use to perform various tasks related to the learning of vocabulary (i.e.

understanding, remembering or using the language). This will be covered in detail in the following chapter.

2.2.4.5. Age and L2 stage

Very little research has focused on the difference in LLS use found among students of different ages. One could mention O' Malley (1985a), whose study showed that all subjects generally resorted to cognitive strategies while metacognitive strategies were restricted to older learners.

As for L2 stage, it should be noted that language proficiency has been studied and tested in different ways. Thus, while some studies employ concrete means to measure students' language command, such as proficiency and achievement tests, others rate it according to students' course level or even self-rated proficiency. Anyway, most studies established a strong relationship between LLS use and language learning outcomes.

→ Proficiency stated by tests

In the study previously mentioned conducted by Green and Oxford (1995), students sat the *English as a Second Language Achievement Test (ESLAT)* to determine their proficiency. The results revealed a greater LLS use by high-achievers with special incidence on cognitive, compensation, metacognitive and social strategies. Consistently, TOELF scores were employed by Park (1997) to group students at two universities in Korea according to their language command. The best students reported a higher use of strategies in the SILL, especially in cognitive and social strategies.

The same applies to Griffiths (2003), who researched the LLSs of private school students in New Zealand learning English as L2. They were distributed in different level tests according to the scores achieved on the *Oxford Placement Test* and a significant correlation between strategy use and language proficiency was identified: the higher the level, the more they resorted to LLSs.

→ Self-rated proficiency

Research has also been conducted on the relationship between LLS use and language proficiency stated but not objectively rated. Oxford and Nyikos (1989) surveyed the LLSs of students with different self-rated proficiency and discovered that those who were very satisfied with the proficiency level acquired in reading, speaking and listening were the ones who reported a higher strategy use.

In the same vein, Chamot and Küpper (1989) carried out an analysis of LLSs of students rated by their teachers as good, average or poor and pointed out that although learners of all levels did employ strategies, those at higher level reported a wider and more frequent use.

In Galicia (Spain), Palacios-Martínez (1995) surveyed the LLSs of EFL secondary school and university students. Although university subjects reported a higher number of strategies than their high school counterparts, this was not statistically significant. However, cognitive and pronunciation strategies were significantly more frequently employed at university stages while memory and compensation strategies were more popular at secondary schools. Finally, none of them resorted to affective or social strategies. Since this survey pioneered research on LLSs in Galicia, it was certainly taken into account in the present study.

More recently, bilingual university students in Singapore were surveyed by Wharton (2000) to determine their LLS regarding their self-rated proficiency. A clear trend was observed: students who felt that their proficiency in EFL was high were those who reported a frequent use of VLSs and vice versa. This finding was identified by the researcher as “two-way” because both proficiency and strategy use have a reciprocal effect.

In view of the aforementioned investigation, it seems clear that the relationship between proficiency and use of strategies is strong. This study will attempt to clarify this issue, so students will be categorised according to their proficiency level by means of a well-known and widely accepted test (cf. Chapter 3).

2.2.4.6. Learning style

Learning styles are one of the individual factors that exerts more influence in the process of L2 acquisition (Ellis, 1994). Indeed, the relevance of this feature was advocated by Peacock who, basing his investigation on Reid’s work (1995), hypothesized that “all students have their own learning styles and learning strengths and weaknesses” and “a mismatch between teaching and learning styles causes learning failure, frustration, and demotivation” (Peacock, 2001b: 1).

Nevertheless, as is generally the case in all aspects of language acquisition, scholars do not agree on its definition. Keefe (1979: 4) has defined learning style as “cognitive, affective and physiological traits that are relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with, and respond to the learning environment”; Ehrman and Oxford (1990: 311) consider it as “preferred or

habitual patterns of mental functioning and dealing with new information”; whereas Reid (1995: viii) defines it as “an individual’s natural, habitual, and preferred way(s) of absorbing, processing, and retaining new information and skills”.

Taking into account these definitions, Oxford *et al.* (1992) stated that learning styles were made up by cognitive, affective and behavioural aspects and identified four main styles:

- a) *Global versus analytic*, where global learners create an overall image of the learning situations while analytics focus on specific details by analysing, comparing and contrasting individual elements.
- b) *Field dependence versus field independence*. The main difference between these two styles is that the latter are able to extract key elements from a complex background whereas the former lack this ability, not being able to make abstraction when facing distraction. Thus, field dependent learners are more reliant on the teacher’s advice to direct their own learning process.
- c) *Feeling versus thinking* deal with whether learners make decisions on logic and rules (thinkers) or their decisions are based on more personal considerations (feelers).
- d) *Impulsive versus reflective* refer to the divergence between learners who react almost immediately to a cognitive stimulus and those who take their time to think.

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- e) *Intuitive-random* versus *concrete-sequential*, where the former resort to their own criteria to find their learning pace whereas the latter depend more on external criteria and learn step by step following a chronological order.
- f) *Closure-oriented* versus *open-oriented* relate to the tolerance of ambiguity. When facing a learning situation, open learners are tolerant of ambiguity and they do not feel anxious about either not knowing all the information or getting a quick solution. Conversely, closed learners are low tolerant of ambiguity and try to find an answer quickly.
- g) *Extroverted* versus *introverted*, regarding the way they cope with learning situations. Extroverts depend more on other people whereas introverts rely mainly on their ideas and inner thoughts.
- h) *Visual* versus *auditory* versus *hands on* (or tactile kinaesthetic), referring to learner use of physical senses (sight, hearing or touch).

Table 7: Style analysis survey

Style	Description	Learning task
Use of physical senses for study and work:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual • Auditory • Hands - on 	Learns best through visual means Prefers listening and speaking activities Learns by doing, movement	Use books, videos, graphics, pictures etc Discussions, debates, audiotapes, role plays etc Projects, active games, experiments, objects etc
Dealing with people		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extroversion • Introversion 	Social interactive learning Prefers more independent learning	Group work, role plays, discussions etc Individual work or pair work with good partner
Handling possibilities		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intuitive - random • Concrete-sequential 	Future-oriented, abstract thinker Present, needs to know what they are doing and why	Likes to solve problems, hypothesis formation Step-by-step learning activities
Approaching tasks		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closure-oriented • Open 	Neat, structured, focuses on all tasks, planner Picks up information in randomly Doesn't like deadlines or rules, enjoys discovery learning	
Dealing with ideas		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global • Analytic 	Risk-taker, main idea Focuses on details, analysis, break down concepts, specific rules	Making predictions, getting main idea, meaning Structured exercises, use of detailed maps

(Source: Cohen, 1998)

Regarding the relationship between learning styles and LLSs, Ehrman and Oxford (1990) tried to determine the strategies employed by students according to their learning style. The results indicated the identification of concrete strategy use to specific learning styles, such as the predilection of extroverts for social strategies while introverts preferred the metacognitive ones. Likewise, thinkers resorted mainly to cognitive and metacognitive strategies and feelers employed social strategies to a greater extent. The learning style variable will not be considered in the present study as it is quite complex to control. However, it could well be studied in subsequent research.

2.2.4.7. Attitudes and beliefs

It has been widely accepted that one of the factors that influences L2 acquisition, either conscious or unconsciously, is connected with the learner's attitudes and previous beliefs. This issue will receive special attention in the present study.

Research has provided several definitions of this notion, whose common features have been summarised by Borg (2001: 186):

A belief is a proposition which may be consciously or unconsciously held, is evaluative in that it is accepted as true by the individual, and is therefore imbued with emotive commitment; further, it serves as a guide to thought and behaviour.

Furthermore, Williams and Burden (1997: 56) specify that they “tend to be culturally bound, to be formed early in life and to be resistant to change”.

In this light, one of the researchers that has most emphasised the importance of investigating students' beliefs in order to plan better instruction was Elaine Horwitz. This scholar was the pioneer in trying to determine students' beliefs in a

systematic way. To this end, based on interviews and discussions with ESL/EFL learners and teachers, she developed the *Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory* (BALLI) with three different versions:

→ Teachers' version of the BALLI (Horwitz, 1985). It was a 27 Likert-scale questionnaire aimed at establishing teachers' beliefs in four areas: 1. Foreign language aptitude, 2. Difficulty of language, 3. Nature of language learning and 4. Appropriate language learning strategies.

→ ESL/EFL students' version of the BALLI (Horwitz, 1987). It comprises 34 Likert-scale items to determine students' beliefs in five areas: 1. Foreign language aptitude, 2. Difficulty of language leaning, 3. Nature of language learning, 4. Learning and communication strategies, and 5. Motivations and expectations.

→ American FL students' version of the BALLI (Horwitz, 1985). It is a questionnaire similar to the ESL/EFL students' version, covering the same fields.

Since then, many studies about attitudes and beliefs about language learning have been carried out all over the world. A brief account of them will be provided here: first, research on students' beliefs will be outlined and then those studies attempting to compare students' versus teachers' beliefs will be presented. Finally, studies attempting to relate beliefs and LLSs will be analysed.

✓ Research on students' beliefs

The earliest investigation was conducted by Wenden (1986, 1987) with ESL students in the USA. She was able to categorise apprentices' ideas according to three main statements: a) the importance of an active stance while speaking and listening, b) the need to learn about grammar and vocabulary, and 3) the role of

personal factors (i.e. affective factors, self-concept, and aptitude). These results were said to be useful in order to predict students' L2 learning difficulties.

Horwitz (1987) surveyed the beliefs of intermediate ESL students enrolled in an intensive English program at the University of Texas. Her findings showed that students from different background held different beliefs about L2 learning, which led the scholar to conclude that students' ideas might be shaped by prior learning experience and cultural background.

These conclusions were later endorsed by another cross-cultural study conducted by Horwitz (1999) with American FL learners together with ESL/EFL Turkish, Korean and Taiwanese students, where significant differences were spotted among groups.

✓ Learners' versus instructors' beliefs

Research has shown that the mismatch between teachers' and students' beliefs may be a source of problems such as:

- misunderstanding and miscommunication (Luppescu and Day, 1990),
- students questioning of their teachers' credibility (Schultz, 1996),
- learners' engagement in strategies of which the teacher disapproves (Rees-Miller, 1993); and
- students' withdrawal and feelings of unhappiness (McCargar, 1993)

Kern (1995) investigated the beliefs of students learning French in California and also those of their teachers. It was a longitudinal study which showed that after a period of instruction the students did not change their attitudes or their beliefs. However, no significant divergence among learners' and teachers' presuppositions was found.

Large discrepancies between the beliefs of EFL teachers and students were found by Peacock in Hong Kong (1998, 1999) in a series of studies conducted in Taiwan. Students rated the learning of EFL as less demanding and expected to learn it more easily than their teachers did. As for particular aspects, learners praised error correction and both vocabulary and grammar exercises to a higher extent than teachers themselves. Peacock argued that this mismatch led to students' dissatisfaction with the class, since they were unable to understand the pedagogical reasons behind each exercise done.

A study conducted in the USA by Siebert (2003) demonstrated a certain degree of similarity but also discordance on certain elements: just as was the case of Peacock's, students did not consider English as hard to learn as their teachers did and both groups did not agree on a specific learning method, which should be carefully considered by instructors (Bernat, 2007: 7).

More recently, Bernat (2007) investigated the beliefs of university EFL learners and teachers in Australia. She could discern significant belief differences between both groups: students held a more optimistic vision of the difficulty of language learning, placed more emphasis on grammar and vocabulary and, surprisingly enough, students maintained stronger beliefs about the relevance of culture in L2 learning. Bernat argued that this gap between groups would have, no doubt, pedagogical implications.

✓ Beliefs and LLS use

Finally, some surveys have focused on finding out the relationship between beliefs and learning strategies to assess whether previous assumptions do influence the use and choice of LLSs.

Wenden's studies (1996, 1997) pioneered the research on the topic, where students who believed in using the language tended to employ more communication strategies whereas those who supported the idea of learning a language resorted to cognitive strategies.

In a previously mentioned study by Park (1995) Korean university students displayed a clear preference for memory and metacognitive strategies rather than communicative strategies. The researcher pointed out that some beliefs held a stronger connection with LLSs than others: due both to their fear of making mistakes and their shyness, they were not prone to using strategies involving interaction even when they were willing to meet English speakers. Similarly, Yang (1999) researched Chinese university EFL students' beliefs in Taiwan trying to correlate them to LLS strategy use. Her findings indicated that students were fairly satisfied with their L2 proficiency, which was reflected in their extensive use of strategies. Besides, they acknowledged the importance of oral aspects and this was correlated to learners' emphasis on oral practice strategies. Yang concluded that both aspects are intrinsically connected: not only do beliefs influence LLS use but also their successful employment of strategies affect their attitudes when they report a strong sense of self-efficacy.

More recently, Hong (2006) conducted research on monolingual Korean and bilingual Korean-Chinese EFL university students' beliefs and learning strategies. Bilinguals reported a higher LLS use than monolinguals: they expressed a greater interest in formal learning and felt less afraid of engaging in meaningful conversations with English speakers than monolinguals. Moreover, both groups showed that a high proficiency level was always linked to more frequent LLS use, endorsing Yang's (1999) findings.

In the light of the above exposed, prior research has demonstrated that individual differences and learning circumstances have an impact on the process of L2 acquisition. Therefore, many of these factors have been considered in the current study.

2.2.4. Strategy training

Given the importance placed on LLSs, there is a great interest in finding out whether these strategies can be taught so that low-achieving students can improve their competence in L2 acquisition. To this end, research has been conducted providing guidance on strategy training though few empirical studies have tried to assess the success of such training.

Bialystok (1983) carried out two experiments to investigate how L2 French learners could improve their ability to inference the meaning of words from textual cues. After the training, learners performed better in overall comprehension of a written text than providing the learners with picture cues or even using a dictionary.

Likewise, Cohen and Apehik (1980) trained adult learners of L2 Hebrew in learning vocabulary items by means of associations and studied the results on the basis of recall exercises. The conclusion was that the experimental group outperformed the control group. They also reported that those learners who were more proficient from the beginning were also the most proficient in using association in recall tasks, which led them to conclude that training in forming associations might be better for advanced learners rather than for beginners.

A lower degree of success was seen in an experiment supervised by O' Malley *et al.* (1985b) to check LLS training effect on 75 intermediate-level ESL students of different ethnic backgrounds (Hispanic and Asian). One group was trained in the use of imagery and grouping (a cognitive strategy), whereas the second group received training in the same strategy and also in self-evaluation (a metacognitive strategy). The findings showed that even if the two treatment groups did not show great differences, the Hispanic training groups outperformed the Hispanic control group; however, this was not the case for the Asian groups. Thus, Hispanic students benefited from strategy instruction, but Asian students did not, due to their different background culture and previous learning experiences.

Chamot (1983) was concerned with how teachers incorporate LLSs to their teaching programs. She investigated the effects of strategy training on the learners and discovered that it has a positive effect on students' performance in class. However, students hardly ever resorted to LLSs at home. The results demonstrated that the following variables were crucial for succeeding in LLS training: the development of the adequate instructional techniques, the ability to

motivate learners to try out new strategies and, to a great extent, the teacher's interest.

Anna Chamot, together with Michel O' Malley (1990) continued their investigation for the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA), which includes training in learning strategies embedded into activities for developing both language skills and content area skills. They devised the strategic teaching model, whose main purpose is to help learners use English as a second language in order to learn through the integration of language and context. They argued that learners might employ the same kind of strategies both for learning languages and for learning other subjects. Moreover, learning strategies could also increase low-achieving learners' confidence.

In Spain, several studies have been conducted on this area. Ribé (1997) presented a thorough list of techniques and strategies for EFL. He is well-known for what he called *3rd generation tasks method*, that is, a L2 learning method which makes use of some specific tasks so as to teach a language through language itself, including virtual reality, multi-episodic tasks, computers and so on.

Outside Spain, some years later, Huang (2001) demonstrated the effectiveness of strategy training with EFL university students in Taiwan. After a six-month training period, the experimental group that received strategic instruction obtained considerable higher scores in EFL proficiency, learning motivation and strategy use than those who were not instructed in LLSs.

Some guidelines for strategy training have also been suggested. O' Malley and Chamot (1990) developed a five-step strategy training model starting with

strategy identification, new strategy introduction, strategy practice and, finally, strategy use evaluation, as reflected in the table below.

Table 8: Strategic teaching model

-
1. Assess strategy use with:
 - Think-aloud
 - Interview
 - Questionnaire
 2. Explain strategy by:
 - Name it
 - Telling how to use it, step by step
 3. Explain strategy by:
 - Demonstrating it
 - Verbalising own thought processing whole doing task
 4. Scaffold instruction by:
 - Providing support while students practice
 - Adjusting support to student needs
 - Phasing out support to encourage autonomous strategy use
 5. Develop motivation by:
 - Providing successful experiences
 - Relating strategy use to improve performance
-

Source: O' Malley and Chamot (1990: 158)

Furthermore, Oxford (1990) offered a long-term strategy training scheme suitable to ESL/EFL classrooms that, roughly speaking, shares many features with O' Malley and Chamot's teaching model:

Table 9: Steps in the strategy training model

-
1. Determine the learners' needs and the time available
 2. Select strategies well
 3. Consider integrations of strategy training
 4. Consider motivational issues
 5. Prepare materials and activities
 6. Conduct "completely informed training"
 7. Evaluate the strategy training
 8. Revise the strategy training
-

Source: Oxford (1990: 204)

The first step involves assessing students' previous assumptions and beliefs in order to suit their learning needs, in consonance with the prior research on the relevant role played by learners' beliefs and attitudes in L2 acquisition.

The second step recommends a careful selection of strategies to fit the task that has to be performed as well as individual learner differences, such as goals or learning style. Strategies are supposed to be useful for a wide range of language learning tasks beyond a concrete class.

There are several recommendations or suggestions that can be provided for successful strategy training. Strategies should also be integrated into regular classes because they should not be regarded as a separate teaching. It has to be a gradual and progressive training process whereby learners are offered extensive practice.

Learners should also be trained to take control of their affective factors, such as motivation and anxiety. Moreover, L2 strategy training asks for direct handling of individual differences (beliefs, interests...). Besides, this kind of training entails the use of a wide variety of activities, handouts, explanations, reference materials and homework; however, in view of the results that may be obtained, it is worth spending time on devising teaching materials.

Teachers should also make learners aware that they are being instructed into the use of particular strategies and that they will be valuable to facilitate the learning process. These strategies are to be overtly presented and practised.

Evaluation is an important aspect of strategy training, so learners should be oriented about how to assess their own learning progress and how strategies improved it. Finally, teachers should periodically revise the materials employed to ensure that they are still suitable for the learning progress.

2.3. Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLSs)

Once the general theoretical framework has been discussed, I will move on to examine the main point of this study, i.e. vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs). This section attempts to answer what is meant by VLS. Then, a classification of different types of strategies together with a review of the most relevant literature on the subject will be provided. The section ends with some general guidelines on how to introduce the VLSs in the EFL classroom.

2.3.1. Definition

VLSs refer to a specific type of language learning strategy focused on the acquisition of vocabulary. Despite the extensive research that focused on this topic in recent years, there is not yet a clear definition of the term.

Fan lists the five major steps identified by Brown and Payne (1984) in the lexical acquisition process and argues that VLSs relate to the stages below:

(a) having sources for encountering new words, (b) getting a clear image, either visual or auditory or both, of the forms of the new words, (c) learning the meaning of the words, (d) making a strong memory connection between the forms and the meaning of the words, and (e) using the words. (2003: 223)

Similarly, Schmitt (1997) takes as reference the generic definition of LLS provided by Wenden and Rubin (1987: 19), that is, "... any sets of operations, steps, plans, routines used by the learner to facilitate the obtaining, storage, retrieval, and use of information", to assert that VLSs "could be any which affect this rather broadly-defined process" (Wenden and Rubin, 1987: 23).

Some years later, Nation (2001: 217), instead of offering a precise definition of VLS, puts forward some of the features of this kind of strategy, considered as an integral part of LLSs. According to him, a VLS should:

- *involve choice, that is, there are several strategies to choose from;*
- *be complex, that is, there are several steps to learn;*
- *require knowledge and benefit from training; and*
- *increase the efficiency of vocabulary learning and vocabulary use.*

In other words, VLSs are a set of varied strategies employed at different stages of vocabulary learning that are liable to be taught and that improve both L2 vocabulary acquisition and use.

In Spain, Jiménez-Catalán (2003: 56) combines both Wenden and Rubin's definition of LLS and Schmitt's notion of VLS to provide a definition of her own as:

Knowledge about the mechanisms (processes and strategies) used in order to learn vocabulary as well as steps or actions taken by students (a) to find out the meaning of unknown words, (b) to retain them in long-term memory, (c) to recall them at will, and (d) to use them in oral or written mode.

Without ignoring all the considerations exposed above, the latter definition will constitute the basis for the present study, especially when designing the research instruments (cf. chapter 3).

2.3.2. VLSs taxonomy

If defining VLSs was a troublesome procedure, their classification is also controversial. Several researchers have proposed different classifications of VLSs based on their own criteria, which led Fan (2003: 223) to conclude that “no

classification is perfect and any individual strategy may fall into one category or another, depending on the aspect in focus”.

To date, several VLS categorisations have been provided, being those of Gu and Johnson (1996), Nation (2001) and Schmitt (1997) the most outstanding.

Gu and Johnson (1996) employed a questionnaire that combined both the elicitation of students’ beliefs about vocabulary learning, and the VLSs used by learners. They were divided into three main categories: beliefs, metacognitive strategies and cognitive strategies, which were further subdivided into six main sets, as illustrated in the table below:

Table 10: Gu and Johnson’s taxonomy of VLSs

Beliefs	Metacognitive regulation	Cognitive strategies
<p>Beliefs about vocabulary learning Words should be memorised. Word should be acquired in context: bottom-up. Words should be studied and put to use: top-down.</p>	<p>Metacognitive regulation Selective attention. Self-initiation.</p>	<p>Guessing strategies Using background knowledge/wider context. Using linguistic cues/immediate context.</p> <p>Dictionary strategies Dictionary strategies for comprehension. Extended dictionary strategies. Looking-up activities.</p> <p>Note-taking activities Meaning-oriented note-taking strategies. Usage-oriented note-taking strategies.</p> <p>Rehearsal activities Using word lists. Oral repetition. Visual repetition.</p> <p>Encoding strategies Association / elaboration. Imagery. Visual encoding. Using word-structure. Semantic encoding. Contextual encoding.</p> <p>Activation strategies</p>

(Source: Gu and Johnson, 1996: 654-655)

Nation’s (2001) taxonomy of VLSs separates three different aspects regarding vocabulary acquisition: the first category deals with strategies rather metacognitive in nature of planning the learning experience, the second is

concerned with the process of looking for information about lexical items and the third part focuses on the already explained processes of vocabulary acquisition namely, noticing, retrieval and generation (cf. 2.1.3):

Table 11: Nation’s taxonomy of VLSs

General class of strategies	Types of strategies
Planning: choosing what to focus on and when to focus on it	Choosing words Choosing the aspects of word knowledge Choosing strategies Planning repetition
Sources: finding information about words	Analysing the word Using context Consulting a reference source in L1 or L2 Using parallels in L1 and in L2
Processes: establishing knowledge	Noticing Retrieving Generating

(Source: Nation, 2001: 218)

Notwithstanding these categorizations, Jiménez-Catalán (2003: 60) argues that the taxonomy compiled by Schmitt (1997) boasts many advantages such as its suitability to be “standardized as a test [...] to collect the answers from students easily”. Moreover, “it is based on the theory of learning strategies as well as on theories of memory [...] and technologically simple”, therefore, easy for “coding, classification and managing of the data in computing programs”. Also, it can be “used with learners of different ages, educational backgrounds and target languages”. Finally, “it is rich and sensitive to the variety of learning strategies, and allows comparison with other studies, among them Schmitt’s own survey”. Accordingly, the research instruments employed in the current study will be based

on Schmitt's taxonomy of VLSs, though adapted to the research goals of this investigation⁸ (cf. chapter 3).

Schmitt (1997) took four of the six categories established by Oxford, namely, social, memory, cognitive and metacognitive strategies and added a new category, which includes those strategies used to discover the meaning of new words without asking it to another person: determination strategies. This last category was inspired by Oxford's guessing strategies included within the group of compensation tactics. All these VLSs are in turn sub-divided into two main groups: strategies for discovering the meaning of a new word and strategies used to consolidate it once found (Table 12).

2.3.2.1. Discovery Strategies

The first task a vocabulary learner must complete is that of understanding the meaning of unfamiliar lexical items they come across.

2.3.2.1.1. Determination strategies

Schmitt (1997: 205) defines *determination* strategies as those used "when faced with discovering a new word's meaning without recourse to another person's expertise". This means that learners can either try to infer the meaning of unknown items or resort to reference materials.

⁸ Segler *et al.* (2002) agree with Jiménez-Catalán on praising Schmitt's categorization though they regret that none of the existing categorizations takes into account the depth-of-processing factor (Craik and Tulving, 1975); a theory which, despite criticism, has shown that a deep analysis involving a greater cognitive effort or involvement with the meaning results in greater retention of the term (cf. section 2.1.3.)

Chapter 2: Literature review

Table 12: Schmitt's taxonomy of VLSs

Dimension	Discovery	Consolidation
Determination	Analyse part-of-speech Analyse affixes and roots Check for L1 cognate Analyse any available pictures or gestures Guess from textual context Bilingual dictionary Monolingual dictionary Word lists Flash cards	-
Social	Ask teacher for an L1 translation Ask teacher for paraphrase or synonym of new word Ask teacher for a sentence including the new word Ask classmates for meaning Discover new meaning through group work activity	Study and practise meaning in a group Teacher checks students' flash cards or word lists for accuracy Interact with native-speakers
Memory	-	Study word with a pictorial representation of its meaning Image word's meaning Connect word to a personal experience Associate the word with its coordinates Connect the word to its synonyms and antonyms Use semantic maps Use 'scales' for gradable adjectives Peg method Loci method Group words together to study them Group words together spatially on a page Use new word in sentences Group words together within a storyline Study the spelling of a word Study sound of word Say word aloud Image of word form Underline initial letter Configuration Use keyword method Affixes and roots/parts of speech, Paraphrase word meaning, Use cognates in study Learn words of an idiom together Use physical action Use semantic feature grids
Cognitive	-	Verbal repetition Written repetition Word lists Flash cards Take notes in class Use the vocabulary section in your textbook Listen to tape of word lists Put English labels on physical objects Keep a vocabulary notebook
Metacognitive	-	Use English-language media (songs, movies, newscasts, etc.) Testing oneself with word tests Use spaced word practice Skip or pass new word Continue to study word over time

(Source: Schmitt, 1997: 207-208)

→ Guessing strategies are extremely important to find out what new terms mean.

Indeed, they have been included in all three aforementioned taxonomies (Gu and Johnson classified it as *cognitive* and Nation as *noticing*).

These strategies include guessing from structural knowledge of the language, guessing from an L1 cognate and guessing from context. The analysis of specific parts of speech or word morphology may offer hints to infer word meaning, so many teachers provide their students with lists of common prefixes and suffixes with their meanings in order to guess meaning from a given affix in an unfamiliar term. Moreover, students may find a cognate in their L1 that resembles the L2 term and, therefore, be able to infer its meaning.

Laufer (1997) warns us, however, about the danger of word part analysis or L1 cognate comparison. She contends that a word is not always the sum of its parts, i.e. “shortcomings” does not mean short visits, but “faults”, neither can be idioms interpreted by breaking them into parts, that is, “kick the bucket” meaning “to die”. Cognates may also be deceptive for students: “sympathetic” is not the English equivalent of “simpático” but of “comprensivo” (all cited in Ruutmetts, 2005: 43). Hence, although they may be useful strategies, they are not 100% reliable.

As for guessing from textual context, inferencing word meaning from context is the most frequent way learners discover the meaning of new words. Several clues can help learners to come up with meanings, such as the topic, that is, an outline of what they are reading, the title and even some other clues related to discourse, such as redundancy, anaphora, intonation or punctuation, which help sharpen students’ ability to discover meaning through the context alone.

Nation (1990) states that a good way to manage the learning of great amounts of vocabulary is through indirect learning, for instance, learning new words in

context through extensive reading and listening, or problem-solving group work activities. Nevertheless, and despite the fact that learning from context may be a good way to enhance work knowledge, beginners cannot start to learn from context until they are familiar with basic vocabulary so as to be able to comprehend what they are actually reading.

Schmitt (1997: 209) emphasises that guessing meaning from context can be a major source of lexical acquisition but the learner has to possess an adequate level of vocabulary as well as sufficient background knowledge of the content for guessing to be effective. Moreover, if the context is not rich enough in clues, the learner will be in trouble.

→ Reference materials entail an intentional approach to vocabulary learning as opposed to guessing strategies, which can be techniques used in an incidental way of learning. Included in all the taxonomies (in Gu and Johnson's as a subcategory of cognitive strategies and in Nation's as part of the process of finding information about words), Nation (2001: 281-282) considers that dictionaries are a good resource for:

- ✓ Comprehension (decoding): looking up unknown words met while listening, reading or translating or confirming guesses about word meaning.
- ✓ Production (encoding): looking up words needed to speak, write or translate, looking up spelling, pronunciation, meaning, etc. of known words...
- ✓ Learning: choosing unknown words to learn or enrich knowledge.

This scholar insists on the necessity of a skilful use of dictionaries, training students how to do it in the right way and taking advantage of the vast information provided, not just word meaning.

Furthermore, he provides a rich analysis about different types of dictionaries: monolingual, bilingual and bilingualised (i.e. they “contain the information that is in a monolingual dictionary plus a translation of the head word” 2001: 290).

Monolingual dictionaries contain much more information about terms but it is also true that students with less proficiency in the L2 language may have difficulties in understanding the definitions provided. Conversely, bilingual dictionaries are better at helping learners understand word meaning and can be used in a bidirectional way: L2-L1 and L1-L2. However, they are often criticized because they are said to promote translation and create in students the mistaken idea that every meaning has a direct equivalent in the other language, apart from containing very little information on word usage. This leads Nation (2001: 290) to suggest a combined use of both types of dictionaries.

Using the dictionary to look up every new word may become a security tool for learners; however, Carter and McCarthy (1988) advise that teachers should encourage their students to rely on varied strategies and use the dictionary only as the last resource.

Schmitt (1997) also included word lists and flashcards as reference materials but they are also embedded within the group of memory strategies, that is why they will be explained later. This scholar acknowledges the overlap of strategies between categories when he says that,

almost all of the discovery and consolidation strategies could be conceivably be used as consolidation strategies, but only the most obvious are listed in both sections of the taxonomy (1997: 206).

2.3.2.1.2. Social strategies

The so-called 'social' strategies do not show the same popularity in all classifications of VLSs. Thus, while Schmitt made a separate category, other scholars, such as Gu and Johnson (1996) or Nation (2001) do not even mention them. This indicates that they are not really considered to have an important role in vocabulary acquisition according to many researchers.

All in all, Schmitt (1997: 210) defines social strategies as those employed to understand word meaning "by asking someone who knows it". However, not all the social strategies involve meaning determination. There are some that can be used to consolidate knowledge, so this set of strategies can be regarded as having a double dimension.

When trying to discover the meaning of a word, the teacher is often the primary source of information by providing the equivalent term in the L1, a synonym, a definition or an example of use. In addition, classmates or friends may also help learners fill knowledge gaps and even group work activities.

Within the category of consolidation strategies, those techniques that lead to practise new words in groups or in pairs, such as role-plays or interviews, can be very fruitful in lexical acquisition (Schmitt, 1997: 211).

2.3.2.2. Consolidation strategies

The second phase of lexical acquisition entails trying to assimilate words that have been learnt so as to store them into the long-term memory. With this purpose

and apart from the section of social strategies presented above, memory, cognitive and metacognitive strategies can also be employed.

2.3.2.2.1. Memory strategies

Memory strategies are “approaches which relate new materials to existing knowledge” (Schmitt, 1997: 205). Such strategies are one of the oldest and they are regarded as rather traditional.

In his VLS classification Gu and Johnson (1996) distinguished two kinds of memory strategies: rehearsal (repetition oral and visual) and encoding strategies (imagery, visual and auditory associations), which coincides with the differentiation made by Schmitt (1997) between rote learning and deep strategies.

They all enable learners to store new terms into memory and then retrieve them when needed for communication. They also help students learn faster and remember better for they favour the integration of new material into existing cognitive units. Thus, memory strategies are subcategorised (Oxford: 1990) into:

→ Creating mental linkages

- ✓ Peg method: It involves the classification of language material into meaningful units to make it easier to remember by reducing the number of unrelated elements. Unrelated items are linked by means of a “peg” or “hook”. As explained by Schmitt (1997: 213),

One first memorises a rhyme like “one is a bun, two is a shoe, three is a tree, etc.” Then an image is created of the word to be remembered and the peg word. If the first word to be remembered is chair, then an image is made of a bun (peg

word) resting on a chair. Recitation of the rhyme draws up these images, which in turn prompts the target words.

- ✓ Associating/Elaborating: It involves relating new words to concepts already in memory significant enough to the learner, even though it might not make sense to someone else. Word associations such as coordination (*apple* – other kinds of fruit like *cherries*), synonymy, antonymy, etc, are said to be very useful (Schmitt, 1997: 212)
 - ✓ Grouping: Students can create meaningful groups of words according to many criteria, such as meaning (animals, houses...), word grammatical categories (adjectives, adverbs...) or terms with the same spelling in order to recall them better
 - ✓ Context embedding: It entails placing a word or phrase in a meaningful sentence, conversation, story...in order to remember it. Indeed, it is a form of association in which the new word is linked to a context. This is called the narrative chain strategy in which words are linked with a storyline (Ruutemets, 2005: 35)
- Applying images and sounds
- ✓ Using imagery: It involves associating a picture to a word or creating a mental image of what has been heard or read in the new language in order to remember it. The image can be an object, for instance, the word 'tax shelter' may be visualised as a small house sheltering a pile of money inside, although learners may actually draw a diagram or sketch as a symbol for the new word (Oxford, 1990: 61).

- ✓ Loci method: explained by Oxford (1990: 35) as a very old method whereby

orators in ancient times could remember a long speech by linking different parts of speech with different rooms of a house or temple, and then taking a walk from room to room.

The same technique can be applied to unconnected words. Spatial memorisation of specific items can also be employed (remembering the concrete place of words on a page, picture, etc.)

- ✓ Semantic mapping “generally refers to brainstorming associations which a word has and then diagramming the results” (Sökmen, 1997: 250). This strategy involves arranging words and relationships (synonymy, antonymy, coordination) into a picture to create a semantic map, i.e. a diagram containing a key concept at the centre or at the top and related words and concepts linked with the key concept via lines or arrows. It entails a variety of other memory strategies, such as using imagery, grouping and association/elaboration, showing visually how some words relate to each other (Oxford, 1990).

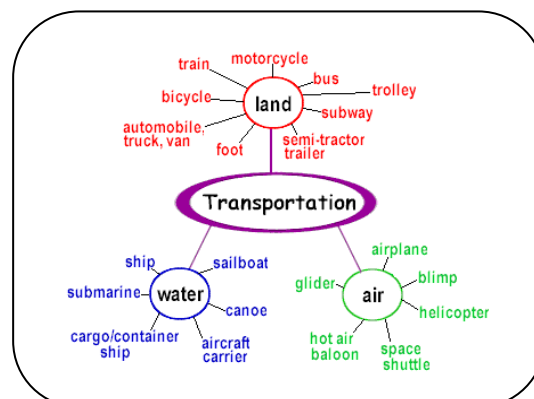


Figure 7: Semantic map for transportation (Source <<http://kidbibs.com/home.htm>>, accessed 18/05/2009)

Likewise, grids are defined by McCarthy (1992: 93) as “a list of features or properties on the horizontal axis and a set of words related by some common component of meaning on the vertical axis”. This scholar encourages its use to illustrate nuances in meaning of semantically related words (cf. table 3, page 29).

- ✓ Keyword method: This is the most researched VLS to date (cf. section 2.3.3). It calls for the establishment of an acoustic and visual link between the target word to be learnt and a word in their own language which sounds similar. This strategy has two steps: first, learners identify a familiar word in their own language that sounds like the new word ('auditory link'). Then, they create a visual image of the new word and the familiar one somehow interacting ('visual link'). Both links are of course meaningful to the learner. Thus, in Spanish the word for 'fly' is 'mosca', so an English speaker learning Spanish may picture flies invading Moscow (phonetically similar to 'mosca') (Oxford, 1990: 62).
- ✓ Representing sounds in memory: This strategy aids learners to remember what they hear by means of acoustic representations of sounds. The learner links the new word with already known words. One of the most commonly employed techniques is that of using rhymes to remember a word; for example, Antonio creates a meaningless rhyme: "I hit a parrot with my carrot. The parrot said I was dead". However, rhymes are not the only way to represent sounds in memory. Carlos

links the new word *cart* with the familiar Spanish word *carta* due to their sound similarity (Oxford, 1990: 63).

- ✓ Employing action: This label applies to those strategies that call for physical response or sensation. Thus the so-called 'Total Physical Response method' (Asher, 1966) allows learners to remain silent at first and employ movements and gestures instead. Songs with orders to be met, rhymes and stories are usually employed so that learners act out words or expressions (Schmitt, 1997)
- ✓ Spaced revisions⁹: Structured review, or spaced practice as Irene Thompson (1987) puts it, is especially useful to remember learnt material in the TL. It deals with revisions in spaced intervals, at first close together and then more widely spaced apart. Self-tests are also included within this subgroup and share the same purpose.

2.3.2.2.2. Cognitive strategies

Schmitt borrowed from Oxford (1990: 43) the definition of cognitive strategies as "manipulation or transformation of the target language by the learner". The use of mechanical techniques (written and verbal repetition), considered by other scholars as memory strategies (Gu and Johnson, 1996), are classified by Schmitt as cognitive since "they are less obviously linked to mental manipulation" (Schmitt, 1997: 206) than the strategies described in the previous set. This scholar argues that this kind of 'shallower' strategies

⁹ Following Oxford (1990), I decided to keep this VLS within memory strategies (although Schmitt classified it as metacognitive) because its main purpose is helping students remember words.

may be more suitable for beginners, because they contain less material which may only distract a novice, while intermediate or advanced learners can benefit from the context usually included in deeper activities (1997: 201).

→ Rehearsal

Oral and written repetition of known terms may be particularly useful for beginners to get acquainted with words.

→ Mechanical means

✓ Word cards (flashcards)¹⁰: This kind of materials may be used as discovery strategies but also as a way of consolidating word knowledge. Learning vocabulary out of context may be considered by some teachers as a step back to outdated methods of learning. Nevertheless, Nation (2001: 302-304) states the effectiveness of such strategy in terms of amount and speed of learning. Direct learning of vocabulary from flashcards offers the advantage of creating a sense of progress and achievement on learners. They are also readily portable and can be used out of class either for learning new words or revising familiar ones. All in all, learners must not assume that learning from word lists or flashcards means that the words are learnt forever. Quite on the contrary, this kind of learning is only an initial stage of learning a particular word and there will always be a need for extra exposure to the words through reading, listening and speaking.

¹⁰ This term refers to a card with a word or expression written on it on one side and the definition or L1 translation on the other.

- ✓ Note-taking/word lists: Taking notes in class is a strategy that allows students both to impose their own structure on collected materials and to perform further revisions. Schmitt and Schmitt (1995) investigated the importance of keeping a vocabulary notebook that enhances lexical acquisition and they highly recommended a gradual increase of information: first, students are advised to note down a pair of words (L2-L1). Then, they should subsequently increase the information (from mere translation to illustrations, examples of use, derivative words, etc.).

2.3.2.2.3. *Metacognitive strategies*

Schmitt (1997: 205) defines metacognitive strategies as “a conscious overview of the learning process and making decisions about planning, monitoring, or evaluating the best ways to study”. Unlike the previously discussed strategies, metacognitive strategies entail indirect management of lexical acquisition. Yet they seem to be extremely important because they are included in all taxonomies established though with different labels: Gu and Johnson (1996) call them “metacognitive regulation”, which is comprised of selective attention (knowledge of what to learn) and self-initiation (finding opportunities to learn); whereas Nation (2001) includes them in a category labelled as ‘planning’.

In this light, Schmitt argues that students should be exposed to the TL through all possible means (books, movies, the Internet) and that they should engage in communicative activities with native speakers. They should also be checking if the process of lexical acquisition works properly and if the learning strategies used

meet their requirements. Finally, they should regulate how to study L2 vocabulary and the time to be spent on doing it (Schmitt, 1997: 216).

It is crucial that learners take responsibility for their own learning process since, quoting Nation (1998: 9):

No matter what the teacher does or what the course book presents, ultimately it is the learner who does the learning. The more learners are aware of how learning is best carried out, the better learning is likely to be.

2.3.3. Empirical research

The great importance of VLSs in L2 acquisition is reflected in the large amount of research conducted in a relatively short period of time. In this section I will focus on a chronological presentation of the major studies carried out strictly on VLSs as a whole. Those investigations dealing with a single strategy (for example, Hulstijn's (1997) account of the keyword method) will not be discussed here for space reasons.

One of the pioneering studies on VLSs was conducted by Cohen and Apeh (1980). They asked their college students learning Hebrew in Israel to take unstructured notes on the strategies they used to learn new vocabulary. The results showed that attempts to create an association between words (sounds, pictures, mental images, personal experience...) were really effective in recalling words.

Ahmed (1989) conducted an investigation involving think-aloud, observation, and interview data from 300 EFL Sudanese students on VLSs. Ahmed employed the VLS survey to distinguish between good and poor learners, and reached the

following conclusions: good students used a greater number of strategies in a more efficient way because they were aware of their own learning process. They reported learning words in context, using the dictionary and resorting to social strategies in order to clarify the meaning of words, i.e. asking other people. Conversely, poor learners showed no interest in contextualised learning and applied strategies inappropriately. Their metacognitive command was also very poor which resulted in an inadequate control of VLSs.

Some years later, in three consecutive studies Sanaoui (1995) interviewed adult English and French foreign languages learners in Canada about the VLSs they used. By analysing the results elicited, she was able to discern two types of learners in terms of their approach to the study of vocabulary, namely, those with a structured approach and those without it, whose main differences are reflected in this table:

Table 13: Features of a structured and an unstructured approach to vocabulary study

Structured approach	Unstructured approach
Opportunities for learning vocabulary	
Self-created Independent study	Reliance on course Minimal independent study
Range of self-initiated activities	
Extensive	Restricted
Record of lexical items	
Extensive (tend to be systematic)	Minimal (tend to be ad hoc)
Review of lexical items	
Extensive	Little or no review
Practice of lexical items	
Self-created opportunities in and outside classroom	Reliance on course

(Source: Sanaoui, 1995: 24)

As can be observed from the table above, an unstructured approximation to vocabulary acquisition is less systematic and correlates to poor outcomes. This researcher stressed the necessity of encouraging students to take control of their

own learning process; in other words, the importance of metacognition is highly emphasised.

One of the first VLS taxonomies was compiled by Stoffer (1995). In her Ph.D thesis, the researcher devised the *VOcabulary Learning Strategy Inventory* questionnaire (VOLSI) that included 53 strategies divided into 9 main categories:

- (1) Strategies involving authentic language use
- (2) Strategies involving creative activities
- (3) Strategies used for self-motivation
- (4) Strategies used to create mental linkages
- (5) Memory strategies
- (6) Visual/auditory strategies
- (7) Strategies involving physical action
- (8) Strategies used to overcome anxiety and
- (9) Strategies used to organize words

In this study, those who studied languages very different from their own increased their reliance on VLSs. Moreover, bearing in mind the categories already presented, the creation of mental ties, such as the association between L1 and L2 words was the most popular.

One of the key studies in the field of VLSs is that developed by Gu and Johnson (1996). They administered a questionnaire in order to triangulate Chinese university EFL learners' beliefs about vocabulary learning, vocabulary level and VLSs. For this purpose, 850 students took a vocabulary size test and answered the *Vocabulary Learning Questionnaire* (VLQ Version 3), which consisted of 2 main sections:

- a. Beliefs about vocabulary learning, including 17 statements belonging to 3 dimensions of beliefs: *Vocabulary should be memorised*, *Vocabulary should be picked up naturally* and *Vocabulary should be studied and used*.

- b. Vocabulary learning strategies, containing 91 strategies subcategorised into *metacognitive regulation* and *cognitive strategies* (Gu and Johnson, 1996: 648)

Many conclusions were drawn from this research. The analysis of beliefs demonstrated that students considered that vocabulary asks for conscious learning and active use of words. As for VLSs, and contrary to what is traditionally believed about Asian students, participants reported not resorting to rote learning very often but displayed a wide range of strategies. Roughly speaking, the use of metacognitive strategies, that is, guessing, skilful use of the dictionary and note-taking, correlated to proficiency while visual repetition was linked to poor performance. What is more, these scholars singled out five learner approaches to vocabulary acquisition:

1. *Readers*, the best group of students who believed mainly in vocabulary learning through reading and contextual guessing but not memorisation,
2. *Active strategy users*, the second best group and the one that employed most strategies. Students were highly motivated and open to a combination of all kinds of strategies,
3. *Encoders*, and
4. *Non encoders*, both groups were very similar and include the vast majority of students. They reported average use of strategies, being the only difference that encoders believed more in association, imagination and mental pictures,

5. *Passive strategy users*, a group of low-achievers who based their learning on memorisation and visual repetition of word lists (Gu and Johnson: 662-666).

Through the think-aloud procedure, Lawson and Hogben (1996) explored the VLSs of students learning Italian as a foreign language in Australia. It was an experiment in which students had to learn 12 word cards that contained 12 Italian words, examples of use and an explanation in English. Then, they had to take a test. These scholars were able to identify 15 strategies divided into 4 categories: repetition, word feature analysis, simple elaboration and complex elaboration, being repetition strategies the most frequently employed. Moreover, students who made greater use of strategies were able to recall more words than the others.

A major milestone in VLS research is the large-scale study by Schmitt (1997) in Japan. The survey consisted of 600 high-school, university and adult EFL learners. It sought to determine the VLSs used by learners and also to assess their usefulness, regardless of whether they employed them or not. The results revealed that the most commonly used strategy was looking up words in a bilingual dictionary, which, by the way, was also perceived as the most useful. Other popular and useful strategies were written and verbal repetition, saying words aloud, studying spelling and taking notes in class. Conversely, the least used strategy was to compare L1 and L2 words (looking for L1 cognates), which is understandable because both languages are completely different. Semantic

networks and imagery were also unpopular strategies, being labelled as not useful.

Another important discovery was that the groups of subjects belonged to different L2 stage levels and he was able to discern a strategy pattern: the more mature the learner, the deeper the VLSs. Shallower strategies, such as repetition were more often used by high-school students while deeper strategies involving a complex processing, such as creating a mental picture of the word were more frequently exploited by adults.

Nevertheless, the greatest contribution of this study was the compilation of the most thorough taxonomy of VLSs to date. After a review of the relevant literature and their own experiences as a teacher, Schmitt listed 58 VLSs and attempted to categorise them according to Oxford's scheme, namely, social, cognitive, metacognitive and memory strategies (cf. section 2.2.).

He found that some strategies could be categorised into several groups; in lexical acquisition both cognitive and memory strategies are used to recall words. Therefore, he decided to label as cognitive only those strategies that do not involve mental manipulation, i.e. repetition and mechanical techniques.

Furthermore, he included a new category to describe those strategies used to discover the meaning of new words and called it 'determination'. All VLSs were further subdivided into those employed to discover the meaning of a word and those used to consolidate word knowledge. Indeed, this is one of the weaknesses of his taxonomy, admitted by the investigator himself when he asserted that

many strategies can belong simultaneously to both categories. Still, it is the most internationally acknowledged compilation of VLSs.

Schmitt's research formed the basis for the survey conducted by Kudo (1999) with 504 high-school EFL learners in Japan. In a pilot study, Schmitt's VLS taxonomy together with some other additional items added by the scholar was organised into four categories: cognitive, memory, metacognitive and social strategies. Later on, these four categories would be reduced to only two: direct and indirect, in the main study.

The overall results indicated that VLS use was very low. The most popular strategies were rote learning and bilingual dictionary use, whereas deep processing strategies, such as the keyword method or semantic mapping were rarely employed, which endorses Schmitt's findings. Moreover, Kudo's greatest achievement was that strategy use was not culturally conditioned. This study seems to confirm then the results elicited by Oxford (1990) in the United States, contrary to what was commonly assumed by researchers (cf. section 2.2.4.3.).

Inspired by the work of Sanaoui, Koji-Sabo and Lightbown (1999) investigated the VLSs strategies of two very different groups of students: undergraduate ESL learners in Canada and pre-university EFL learners in what used to be North-Yugoslavia. The researchers asked participants to answer a VLS questionnaire and two tests: a vocabulary knowledge (Yes/No test) and an overall English proficiency (cloze test).

The questionnaire divided VLSs into 5 categories: time, learner independence, note-taking, review and dictionary use. The most important difference between

groups emerged in the category of independence because ESL learners proved to be more independent, while the EFL group depended much more on review strategies. What is more, a correlation between strategy use and learning outcomes was also shown. Among VSLs, learners' initiative and independence as well as the time devoted to English learning became the best indicators of learning achievement, which endorses the aforementioned conclusions drawn by Gu and Johnson (1996).

Fan (2003) surveyed the VLSs of 1,067 students at seven higher education institutions in Hong Kong in order to find out the strategies used most and least frequently, the strategies perceived as most and least useful and the actual usefulness of the strategies according to learning outcomes. With this aim in mind, she resorted to a vocabulary level test to determine learners' proficiency and a questionnaire based on previous research (O' Malley and Chamot, 1990 and Oxford, 1990; Gu and Johnson, 1996). This included 56 strategies classified into 9 categories: management, sources for encountering new words, guessing, dictionary, repetition, association, grouping, analysis and revision of know words.

Broadly speaking, the participants considered VLSs as useful, yet their usage was rather low. The use of dictionary and the review of known words strategies were the most frequently mentioned and also those rated as the most useful. Moreover, students did not feel inclined to rote memorisation, use of imagery or the keyword method and high-achievers employed a wider range of strategies, including guessing, dictionary, and known words. Curiously enough, management strategies were considered as efficient by most learners but rarely used and vice

versa, guessing strategies were very popular but not rated as useful. As can be seen, these results confirm previous results (Kudo, 1999; Schmitt, 1997).

Jiménez-Catalán (2003) introduced the gender variable into the investigation of VLSs. Making use of Schmitt's taxonomy questionnaire she surveyed the strategies of primary, secondary and university EFL learners and adults learning Basque as a second language in La Rioja and Navarre (Spain). Special attention was also paid to keeping the balance between men and women for further comparison.

Both female and male groups showed low VLS use, being statistically higher for women than for men. This endorses the results of prior studies comparing the sex factor in the use of strategies (cf. section 2.2.4.2.). Roughly speaking, men and women also differed in the strategies employed: women opted for formal rule, input elicitation, rehearsal and planning strategies while men preferred techniques involving the use of images. This led the researcher to state that divergence in the use of strategies between genders is mainly based on motivation and learning styles. However, she contends the need for conducting more research on the subject to confirm these hypotheses.

In the same light, Wu (2005) surveyed the strategies of 303 high school and university EFL students in Taiwan. This study fully confirmed the results obtained by Schmitt using the questionnaire based on his taxonomy: the most frequently used VLSs were electronic and bilingual dictionaries as well as guessing strategies, which in turn were also the most valued.

Ruutmets (2005) carried out a study on the VLSs used by 237 primary and secondary EFL learners in Tartu (Estonia). The research instruments designed were a semi-structured interview and a vocabulary questionnaire inspired by Kudo (1999). Her findings showed that VLSs were seldom employed, being rote learning the most popular. As in previous studies, the so-called “deep” strategies, such as mental association or imagery were completely unusual. Significant differences were also found between genders, which coincide with those of Jiménez-Catalán. Indeed, women relied more on rote rehearsal and dictionaries while men opted for guessing or picking up words from different sources.

More recently, Pavičić (2008) conducted a series of studies with 358 primary EFL learners in Croatia. The first study was aimed at piloting the *VOcabulary Learning Strategy Questionnaire for Elementary Schools* (VOLSQES). This is a 27-item questionnaire divided into three main categories of strategies: formal vocabulary learning (rote memorisation, L1 reliance and revision), independent vocabulary learning (exposure to TL and memory strategies) and incidental vocabulary learning (learning in naturalistic contexts and communication strategies).

The second study tried to compare the VLSs used by learners and the vocabulary teaching strategies of their instructors. To do so, teaching strategies were elicited by recording 45 EFL lessons. Then a questionnaire that consisted of the VOLSQES and another section including 29 statements about learners’ perceptions of vocabulary teaching strategies was administered to a group of students. Contrary to the researcher’s expectations, students’ VLS use is

dependent on the vocabulary teaching techniques of their teachers. Furthermore, VLS training is unsystematic and completely based on teachers' knowledge and interest.

The third study attempted to compare the VLSs employed by learners of two different foreign languages. The VOLSQES was administered to 675 elementary students learning English versus German as a foreign language in Croatia. The data elicited from the cross-linguistic experiment revealed that the language being learnt determines to a great extent the VLSs employed. Indeed, there were some core strategies commonly employed by both groups, namely, translating into L1 and self-testing. On the contrary, learners of German faced lexical acquisition in a more traditional way, based on formal instruction, memory and metacognitive strategies. However, learners of English presented a more spontaneous approach, taking advantage of incidental learning. The researcher explained that many TV shows are subtitled, not dubbed in Croatia so students could expand their English vocabulary in informal contexts. Although her study could not identify any linguistic aspect of words that can explain the different use of VLSs between groups, Pavičić asserted that the learning context of the FL does influence the use and choice of strategies, which opens a new line of research on vocabulary acquisition.

In short, it could be stated that the bulk of investigation on VLSs has been conducted in Asia (China, Hong Kong, Japan and Taiwan). This leads to the need for carrying out different surveys in other parts of the world in order to contrast them to prior research, which is precisely one of the objectives of this study.

The vast majority of studies focused on identifying the VLSs employed by EFL learners and their perceived usefulness, as well as on discovering which strategies were linked to learning outcomes.

Finally, the research instruments that have proven to be appropriate for this type of studies are think-aloud tasks, interviews, questionnaires and observation. The think-aloud procedure asks participants to verbalise the strategies employed in different learning situations. Students let their thoughts flow verbally without trying to control them (in stream-of-consciousness fashion) in a present time set. A slightly different method is “self-observation”, which refers to the students’ introspection of specific language behaviour and analysis of their own thoughts, either immediately after the event, called “introspection”, or later, called then “retrospection” (Cohen and Hosenfeld, 1981). The main disadvantages of this instrument are that the data elicited are very difficult to interpret and analyse. Moreover, many cognitive processes are unconscious and, therefore, extremely complex to be verbalised.

The interview consists of a set of questions predetermined by the researcher. An example was provided by O'Malley *et al.* (1985a) in their *General Interview Guide*. Thus, interviews may be more or less structured, leaving a greater or lesser degree of freedom to the interviewee. Anyway, the researcher has no absolute control over the answers because the interviewee may ask questions to clarify terms or make comments that were not expected.

The semi-structured interview format is very common because it allows some freedom in the responses to specifically focused and well-structured questions (Wenden, 1987).

Furthermore, the questionnaire asks participants to answer a series of questions by choosing among several responses given in advance (although some open questions may be included). One well-known questionnaire is the *Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL)* developed by Oxford (1990), which has been used around the world in its original, adapted or translated version. The questionnaire is the most popular instrument in the investigation of VLSs (Sanaoui, 1995; Gu and Johnson, 1996; Schmitt, 1997; Kudo, 1999; Fan, 2003; Jiménez-Catalán, 2003) because it allows for data elicitation from a large number of respondents in relatively short time. Uniformity in the data enables computerized statistical analysis and results can be generalised. However, caution must be taken in the interpretation of results since participants answer what they think they do or what researchers expect them to think and not what they actually do in vocabulary learning.

Lastly, observing learners performing a variety of tasks, usually in classroom settings, is a research instrument that enables researchers to check learners' actual behaviour. However, observation may not be fruitful since it is difficult to obtain accurate insights about learners' conscious mental operations (Rubin, 1987). In addition to this, researchers tend to introduce a degree of subjectivity into the processes that they are observing according to their own expectations;

this is why it is highly recommended that observations are carried out simultaneously by several investigators.

PART 2
THE STUDY

Chapter 3

Method

Chapter 3

Method

As outlined in the introductory section, this study has two main aims. Firstly, it investigates learners' beliefs about vocabulary learning and their use of vocabulary strategies in the Galician EFL context. Secondly, it focuses on learners' and teachers' views on lexical acquisition and the strategies used on vocabulary learning. Teachers' and students' perceptions will be compared and analysed.

The aim of this chapter is twofold; on the one hand, I will state the research questions that this study attempts to answer and, on the other hand, I will offer a detailed account of the methodology employed to carry out the present study.

It will be organised as follows: the first section establishes the objectives of the current study. Secondly, it describes both the sample and selection criteria of the participants. Thirdly, materials are presented, namely, vocabulary test, questionnaires and interviews. In the fourth part, I will deal with the procedures followed to carry out the piloting and the main study.

3.1. Research questions

This study is directed by the following research questions:

1. What are the beliefs about the vocabulary learning process held by Galician EFL learners?
2. Are the learners' beliefs homogeneous across the different research variables considered in this study?

3. Are the aforementioned learners' beliefs different from those of their teachers? If so, in what way and to what extent?
4. Is there any relationship between the aforementioned beliefs and vocabulary achievements as shown in the VLT?
5. What are the vocabulary learning strategies employed by Galician EFL learners?
6. Are learners' reported vocabulary learning strategies similar to those perceived by their teachers?
7. What particular factors exert influence on the choice and use of those vocabulary learning strategies?

3.2. Participants

As already mentioned (cf. chapter 1), I aimed to compare and contrast both sides of the vocabulary learning process. Therefore, students' and teachers' data were collected.

All the subjects volunteered to participate in this project and I tried to obtain such a sample whose data could become representative of the Galician educational state of the art. Thus, as the table below illustrates, a total of 820 subjects formed the main sample of this study, organised as follows:

Table 14: Number and distribution of participants

Participants	N	%
Students	712	86.8%
Teachers	108	13.2%
Total	820	100%

As mentioned above, one of the aims of this research is to give an account of the English vocabulary learning and teaching process within the Galician setting. Thus, this survey was intended to cover the four provinces in the territory of the Galician autonomous region, in spite of the fact that, as is generally the case, educational centres do not volunteer for this kind of research projects. Then, I mostly resorted to friend teachers and colleagues. That is why I was able to include at least a sample from the whole geographical territory.

As for the number of subjects included, I firmly believe that 712 students and 108 teachers can be considered statistically representative for the purpose and scope of this survey. Taking similar studies as reference point, the amount of participants who collaborated in this investigation is compatible with these reference projects. Indeed, O' Malley *et al.*'s study in 1985(a), considered as a pioneer in strategy research, focused on the learning strategies used by 70 students and 22 teachers in Virginia (USA). Rebecca Oxford in her studies conducted in Puerto Rico and Japan, respectively (Green and Oxford, 1995; Okada, Oxford and Abo, 1996) to find out the learning strategies used by EFL learners, selected a sample of subjects that ranged from 72 to 374. The same applies to Kudo (1999), whose survey about vocabulary strategies employed by Japanese high school pupils included a total of 504 subjects.

More recently, research focused specifically on vocabulary learning conducted mainly in Asia by Taga (2000), Laufer and Goldstein (2004) or Li (2004), is based on results rendered from samples smaller than the current one. Moreover, even

in the case of projects carried out with more subjects, namely, Gu and Johnson (1996) and Fan (2003) conducted in Beijing and Hong-Kong using samples of 978 and 1067 subjects, respectively, it is worth noting that the ratio of EFL learners found in China and in Galicia is completely different. What is more, taking into account the population of each target community, I could dare to say that this sample can be regarded as representative of our educational situation.

3.2.1. Selection

This project was carried out at several data collection stages, including both teachers and students. In order to obtain data from subjects with diverse proficiency levels in English, students and teachers from very different grades were selected. Thus, the initial phase comprised secondary school pupils (ESO, both 1st and 2nd cycle) and non-compulsory secondary education students (Bacharelato), who were supposed to stand for elementary and intermediate proficiency levels (n=351).¹¹ Special emphasis was placed on comparing the results obtained from students with those of their teachers, so professionals from their same educational centres were asked to collaborate, as well as other EFL colleagues belonging to the same grades and educational levels (n=34).

As mentioned, the second phase of this study focused on the highest proficiency level. To do so, University students enrolled in the second cycle of English Philology and Translation Studies (University of A Coruña, University of Santiago de Compostela, University of Vigo), together with those students

¹¹ IES Arzúa, IES “Camilo José Cela” (Padrón), IES “María Casares” (Oleiros), IES Melide, IES Someso.

in the second cycle of School of Languages (EOI de Ferrol, EOI de Lugo, EOI de Santiago de Compostela and EOI de Ourense) were selected (n=328). Furthermore, I also considered some volunteer subjects who were taking other type of EFL studies to improve their overall training as, for instance, those enrolled in the Modern Language Centre of Santiago University, so as to complete our general survey with those highly proficient students (n=23).

As far as EFL teachers are concerned, instructors belonging to the three Galician Universities were willing to cooperate (n=14), as well as teachers from different School of Languages (n=25). However, this sample was not large enough to render any conclusive statement, so some other volunteers were needed. Again, those who were teaching English at other educational institutions were also taken into account, such as the Modern Language Centre (n=2).

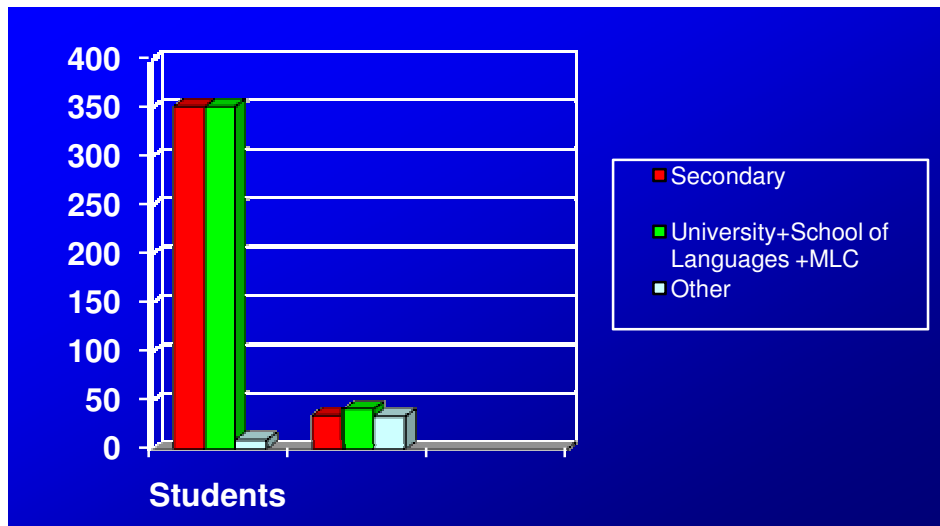


Figure 8: Number and distribution of participants according to teaching institution

3.2.2. Students' background

This first group of participants comprised seven hundred and twelve students (n=712). Since the survey tried to analyse whether students' background characteristics were somehow related to their assumptions on the process of vocabulary learning/teaching and therefore to their use and choice of vocabulary learning strategies, several selection criteria were considered:

◆ **Proficiency:** Initially, there was the idea of taking the same number of pupils belonging to different years; however, this was not possible since it was a volunteer task. Thus, Secondary school pupils were divided into 1st and 2nd cycle of ESO, as well as Bacharelato students. Furthermore, a group of students enrolled in the 2nd cycle of their university degrees and school of languages were selected. Moreover, students in the final years of the Modern Language Centre (n=23) were also invited to collaborate. Finally, there were some subjects who did not belong to any of the aforementioned groups but who were studying at other teaching institutions and who were also included in the general sample (n=10). Figure 9 shows the distribution of the participants in the study:

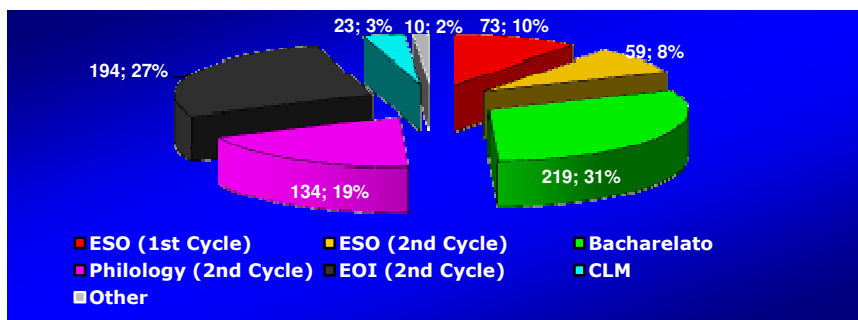


Figure 9: Number and distribution of students according to the grade variable

At first, I considered students' year as an indicator of their English proficiency. However, this was not always an easy correlation. There was, then, the need for a research instrument which could scientifically assess students' command of English. With this purpose in mind, the participants in the study were asked to take Nation's *Vocabulary Levels Test* (VLT) for learners, a placement test that will be described in close detail in the pages that follow.

◆ **Age:** These volunteer subjects were randomly selected so their ages range from 12 (1st cycle ESO) to over 26 years old (especially EOI students), the vast majority of them being under 25, as shown in Figure 10.

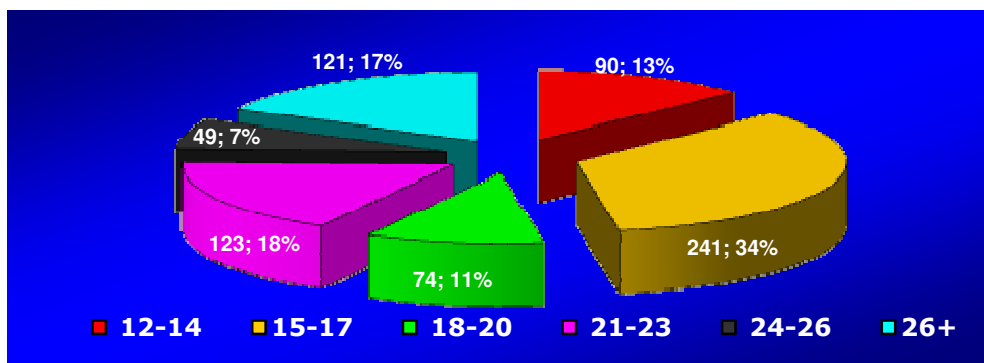


Figure 10: Number and distribution of students according to age

◆ **Gender:** In this sample, the total number of female students was 447 (62.8%) versus 265 males (37.2%). It was originally intended to choose an equal number of male and female students; this was, however, not possible. First of all, in non-compulsory stages of education, it is a well-known fact that females outnumber males. Secondly, this was a volunteer task and female students were more willing to cooperate than male learners. This explains the unbalanced sample according to this factor.

◆ **Teaching institution:** I tried to obtain data from the four provinces, namely, A Coruña, Lugo, Ourense and Pontevedra, so that this sample could be taken as representative of the whole Galician territory. There was also a special care in keeping a balance between rural (less than 10,000 inhabitants) and urban areas. Indeed, there are 3 rather rural secondary schools (IES Arzúa, IES Camilo José Cela, Padrón, IES Melide) and an urban one (IES María Casares, Oleiros). Besides, it seems obvious that both Universities and Schools of Languages are generally located in rather populated areas.

I also included a group of students enrolled in the Modern Language Centre (MLC) at the University of Santiago de Compostela. This school offers yearly courses on different modern languages that enable students to improve their linguistic skills needed for oral and written communication. So those English learners enrolled in the highest grades (level 7, 8, 9) were also taken into account as the characteristics of this institution are comparable to the so called official Schools of Languages (EOI).

Apart from that, there were some pupils (n=10) who freely volunteered to collaborate so I decided not to discard them just because they were not enrolled in a public organisation. Indeed, they were given the placement test, which allowed me to include them to the overall sample on the basis of objective criteria. The figure below shows the schools and institutions involved in this research project:

Table 15: Number and distribution of students according to teaching institution

Teaching institution	N	%
IES Melide	107	15%
IES Arzúa	67	9.4%
IES Someso (A Coruña)	20	2.8%
IES C. J. Cela (Padrón)	77	10.8%
IES M ^a Casares (Oleiros)	81	11.4%
University of Santiago (USC)	11	1.7%
University of A Coruña (UDC)	45	6.3%
University of Vigo (UVIGO)	77	10.8%
Modern Language Centre (USC)	23	3.2%
EOI Santiago	37	5.2%
EOI Ferrol	88	12.4%
EOI Lugo	46	6.5%
EOI Ourense	23	3.2%
Other	10	1.4%
Total	712	100%

◆ **Length of time in the study of English:** Finally, all our students had learnt English for at least 3 years up to more than 10. I decided not to include students with shorter EFL experience since one of the main aims was to survey vocabulary learning strategies; the development of such strategies in a period shorter than 3 years is extremely difficult. Students were then distributed according to the following groups:

Table 16: Number and distribution of students according to years of EFL instruction

Years of EFL instruction	N	%
3-5	58	8.3%
6-10	410	58.3%
+10	235	33.4%
Missing	9	1.3%
Total	712	100%

3.2.3. Teachers' background

The second group of participants comprised one hundred and eight EFL teachers (n=108) who freely volunteered to take part in this survey. As in the case of students, those were the main characteristics that made up their profile:

◆ **Grade:** EFL teachers from all grades were admitted in this project because they were considered to represent the whole range of vocabulary teaching stages, from primary school to university. On the one hand, Primary (n=19) and Secondary school (n=14) teachers' experience could give us an insight of vocabulary learning at elementary stages, whereas those professionals teaching Bacharelato (n=20) were considered to illustrate the learning process at intermediate stages.

At the other end of this continuum, University, EOI and CML professionals could offer their teaching experience to discern differences between elementary and advanced students' vocabulary learning. It is worth noting that, in the case of university lecturers, most of their majors were related to linguistics rather than to literature; this is important because they usually teach English language courses and directly observe the way their students progress in their command of the language.

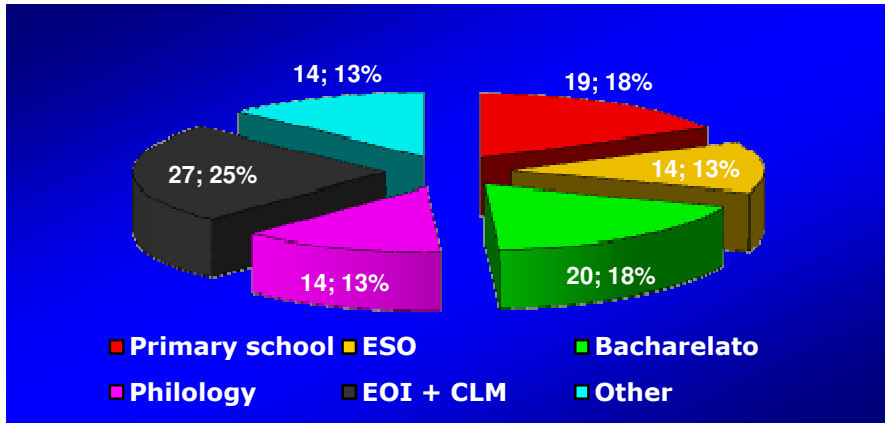


Figure 11: Number and distribution of teachers according to the grade variable

◆ **Age:** In the case of teachers we expected a wide range of ages so we divided the sample into different decades, as illustrated in the figure below. It is worth noting that some teachers (n=6) did not want to disclose their age, which is somehow curious since they were briefed on the purpose of this investigation and they did not even have to write the exact number but simply a range of years:

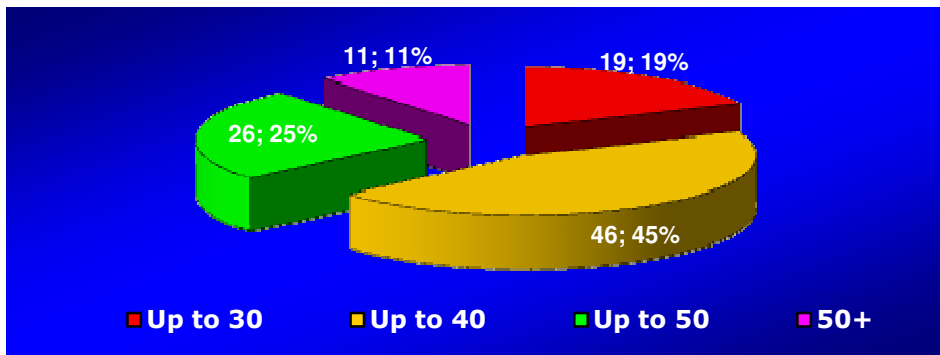


Figure 12: Number and distribution of teachers according to age

◆ **Gender:** This sample consisted of 23 male teachers (21.3%) and 85 females (78.7%). Again, it is an unbalanced sample due to the fact that, in general terms, there are more female professionals teaching English than male ones. So, it is

nothing but a reflection of the reality found nowadays in the Galician educational system.

◆ **Teaching institution:** As previously stated, during the data collection process carried out in the aforementioned centres, both students and teachers were asked to collaborate. However, in the case of teachers, the sample obtained would be no doubt insufficient; as a result, I had to resort to other sources and mechanisms to obtain a wider range of EFL professionals to this survey. This will be explained later on.

Table 17: Number and distribution of teachers according to teaching institution

Teaching institution	N	%
IES Melide	1	0.9%
IES Arzúa	2	1.9%
IES Someso (A Coruña)	1	0.9%
IES C. J. Cela (Padrón)	3	2.8%
IES M ^a Casares (Oleiros)	2	1.9%
University of Santiago (USC)	3	2.8%
University of A Coruña (UDC)	3	2.8%
University of Vigo (UVIGO)	8	7.4%
Modern Language Centre (USC)	2	1.9%
EOI Santiago	13	12%
EOI Ferrol	5	4.6%
EOI Lugo	3	2.8%
EOI Vilagarcía de Arousa	5	4.6%
EOI Ourense	3	2.8%
Other	54	50%
Total	712	100%

◆ **Number of years teaching English:** There were great differences in the length of teaching experience among our subjects. Roughly speaking, the vast majority of them were young professionals, so they had been teaching EFL for less than 10 years. The second group of teachers, that is, those with up to 20 years of teaching experience, was less numerous and that was the case with the oldest group, who have been teaching for more than 20 years.

Table 18: Number and distribution of teachers according to years of EFL instruction

Years of EFL instruction	N	%
0-10	54	50%
11-20	33	30.6%
+20	21	19.4%
Total	108	100%

3.3. Materials

Applied linguists have commonly agreed on the general principle that good research projects involve the use of several instruments to enhance the reliability and validity of the investigation findings (Cohen and Manion, 1994: 236-8).

By looking at retrospective studies about the topic under discussion (Horwitz, 1987, Nunan, 1992; Gu and Johnson, 1996; Okada, Oxford and Abo, 1996; Kudo, 1999; Taga, 2000; Schmidt and Watanabe, 2001; Fan, 2003; Laufer and Goldstein, 2004, just to mention a few of them), three instruments, that is, vocabulary test, questionnaire and interview, were selected and designed to carry out this piece of research. They will be described separately below.

3.3.1. The *Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT)*

In recent years, many scholars have tried to develop methods to measure vocabulary knowledge, either size or depth tests (Read, 1988; Nation, 1990; Schmitt, 1998; Laufer and Nation, 1999). They differ in the focus of their study, namely, those tests whose main aim is to measure the total amount of lexical items known by the learner (size), and on the other hand, those tests on which

each learner has to show the knowledge of a lexical item according to several components.¹²

Since the purpose of using a vocabulary test is not linked to the benefits that might be obtained in language teaching or learning but as a research instrument, that is, mainly to measure the vocabulary size known by our students so that they can be subcategorised into different groups according to their lexical proficiency, the first type of vocabulary test was chosen. Thus, students could be classified as beginners, intermediate or advanced vocabulary learners, and the results obtained in the test could be studied in accordance to those data elicited from both the questionnaires and the interviews.

As stated by Schmitt (2000), even if there is not a standard test of English vocabulary, the so-called *Vocabulary Levels Test* designed by Paul Nation in 1990 is one of the most widely accepted, to the point that it is being offered online at the University of Quebec's website <<http://www.er.uqam.ca/nobel/r21270/levels>>.

Based on West's *General Service List of English Words* (1953), Nation's test determines vocabulary knowledge at five frequency levels based on word frequency: 2,000, 3,000, 5,000, UWL and 10,000.¹³ Thus, following Schmitt's (2000: 174) advice: "because the test gives estimates of vocabulary size at 5 levels, it is useful for placement purposes", an improved version of the original

¹² This particular type of tests is directly related to the concept of what knowing a word means, already discussed in the introduction to this study.

¹³ See Appendix 5 for further details

VLT developed by Schmitt, Schmitt and Clapham (2001) was selected as proficiency grouping tool.

Nevertheless, for this study several adaptations were required. First of all, comparing students showing a wide range of vocabulary levels involves taking into account those learners with low proficiency levels; this means that considering 2,000 words as starting point would be too demanding for them. Accordingly, I resorted again to Nation (1993), who claimed the first 1,000 words of English to be essential for those wanting to use the language and a starting-point to systematically help learners expand their vocabulary knowledge. Thus, he devised the 1,000 *Word Level Test* bearing in mind that learners at this stage may show poor reading skills and problems with the context in which the tested words were embedded. It resulted in a two-fold test of 39 items with a true/false format (see Appendix, versions A and B), where learners were occasionally helped by visual cues.

Roughly speaking, the structure of the tests for the following levels is different from the 1,000 WLT. They are divided into 3 parts: the first two parts, namely, sections A and B, test receptive vocabulary knowledge. Thus, respondents have to match 3 definitions on the left hand side to 6 possible answers on the right. Special care was taken by the test devisers on selecting six similar parts of speech items, that is, sets of nouns, verbs, adjectives and so on, with meanings unrelated to each other (Nation, 1990). Furthermore, section C tests exactly the same words presented in sections A and B but productively, so respondents face 18 sentences in a gapped-word format and are required to provide the missing word.

Both 2,000 and 3,000 *Word Level Tests* are based on high-frequency words. According to Nation (1990), learners need to know at least these 2,000 lexical items because they cover approximately 87% of the words in an average text. Moreover, Laufer (1992b: 100-101) stated that 3,000 high-frequency words are “the lexical threshold of reading comprehension” since they are said to account for 95% of general texts, which is required to infer meaning of unknown words in a successful way (Nation, 1990).

The 5,000 *Word Level Test* draws the dividing line between high and low frequency words and as far as this study is concerned, it was thus considered the highest vocabulary level. I decided not to include the two remaining Nation’s categories, namely, the *University Word Level Test* (UWL) and the 10,000 *Word Level Test*. The rationale for that is that the words included in the UWL, based on the *Academic Word List* (Coxhead, 2000), occur quite frequently in school or university texts (8% of the words in an average text) and represent specialised vocabulary. So, in order to avoid overrating students’ general vocabulary knowledge (since most of these terms have a Latin root), this test was dismissed.

As for the 10,000 *Word Level Test*, since it contains actual low-frequency words, the number of subjects who could pass it would be very limited so it would not be representative at all.

3.3.2. The *Vocabulary Learning Strategies Questionnaire* (VLSQ)

From the initial stages of the investigation on language learning strategies to the most recent stages, scholars have proved the suitability of employing questionnaires as a research tool to gather written data on learning strategies

(Naiman *et al.*, 1979; O' Malley *et al.*, 1985a; Gu and Jonhson, 1996; Taga, 2000; Fan, 2003; Li, 2004).

According to Brown (2001: 6),

questionnaires are any written instruments that present respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react either by writing out their answers or selecting from among existing answers.

They can vary in format from more structured to less structured. The difference lies in the fact that the former are based on a multiple-choice question completion that can be easily scored and analysed; whereas in the latter, respondents are allowed to describe their own learning process in open-ended questions, but whose richness of answers are extremely difficult to score and summarise.

As pointed out by Dörnyei (2003), the main advantages and disadvantages of questionnaires could be summarised as follows. On the one hand, they have limitations due to their inner structure and to respondents' characteristics. It must be borne in mind that, since respondents have to complete questionnaires on their own, questions need to be simple and straightforward, which may lead to rather superficial answers. Also, respondents may feel unmotivated, bored, prone to providing an answer socially accepted or simply unable to understand some items, which may bias the results obtained.

Notwithstanding these difficulties, the benefits that can be taken from questionnaires are more relevant. Indeed, a huge amount of information can be collected in little time because they can be administered to many people at once

and their results can then be quickly coded by computer programmes. Apart from that, especially in the case of researchers with stressing jobs and restricted financial resources, less data collection effort is required because they can be easily distributed, either in person, by mail or e-mail. This is, besides, a cheap way of doing it. Furthermore, they tend to be very versatile, that is, the same questionnaire can be applied to heterogeneous groups of respondents, asking them about different issues in varied situations.

For the purpose of the present study, two versions of *Vocabulary Learning Strategies Questionnaire* (VLSQ)¹⁴ were compiled, one for students and one for teachers, which will be accounted for in detail later. Both of them were inspired by Horwitz's (1987) *Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory* (BALLI), Oxford's (1990) questionnaire known as the *Strategy Inventory for Language Learning* (SILL), Gu and Johnson's (1996) *Vocabulary Learning Strategies Questionnaire* (VLQ), Schmidt and Watanabe's (2001) *Motivation Questionnaire* and Schmitt's (1997) *Vocabulary Learning Strategies Taxonomy* (VLS).

Elaine Horwitz (1987) pioneered the field devising an instrument to assess students' beliefs about learning a FL. It comprised five categories: foreign language aptitude, difficulty of language learning, nature of language learning, learning and communication strategies, and motivation and expectations. This questionnaire has proven to be an internationally accepted research tool to assess beliefs (cf. section 2.2.4.7.) so the first part of the questionnaire specifically designed for the current study owes its structure to the BALLI.

¹⁴ See Appendixes 6-9 for details

In the same vein, Schmidt and Watanabe (2001) developed a questionnaire to survey students' motivation, preferences for instructional activities and learning strategies. The first part was devoted to motivation and it contained 47 statements with reference to motivation, orientation, interest, expectancy, anxiety, language aptitude, competitiveness, cooperativeness and motivational strength. This questionnaire went deeply into the categories established by the BALLI, so it was also taken into account when wording the first section of the VLSQ.

The SILL is a structured survey, whose internal organisation depends on Oxford's learning strategies classification system (cf. chapter 2), which has been used to assess learning strategies in high schools and universities around the world. Its 121 items were designed to evaluate how actively students were involved in their own learning process. Numerous studies have resorted to this survey, proving the SILL to be a powerful research tool (Oxford, 1990; Bedell and Oxford, 1995; Ehrmann and Oxford, 1995; Green and Oxford, 1995; Oxford and Burry-Stock, 1995; Cohen, Weaver and Li, 1998; Kudo, 1999; Mochizuki, 1999; Yang, 1999; Wharton, 2000; Peacock, 2001a; Olivares-Cuhat, 2002).

As far as Schmitt's inventory of VLS is concerned, the SILL was again taken as the main framework. He divided strategies into two main classes: those used to discover a word's meaning and those employed to consolidate it once encountered (Schmitt, 1997). Within this general division, he subcategorised then 58 VLT into Oxford's 4 categories of learning strategies: cognitive, meta-cognitive, memory and social, to which a fifth category was added, that is, determination,

adapted from Oxford's compensation strategies. Again, this taxonomy was successfully used in recent research (Kudo, 1999; Taga, 2000; Segler, Pain and Sorace, 2002; Jiménez-Catalán, 2003; Pavičić, 2008).

Lastly, Gu and Johnson's VLQ was the third research instrument considered when designing the questionnaires used in the present study. They developed a questionnaire containing a great amount of strategies, structured around 2 main sections, namely, beliefs about vocabulary learning and vocabulary learning strategies. This last section grouped vocabulary strategies into two main categories: meta-cognitive regulation and cognitive strategies (Gu and Johnson, 1996).

Many studies up to the present (Taga, 2000; Gu, 2002; Fan, 2003; Li, 2004) have resorted to this questionnaire, since it is very useful to correlate previous assumptions on vocabulary to the choice and use of learning strategies, and in its turn the latter to vocabulary learning outcomes. Since one of the main objectives sought in this research was precisely trying to establish some correlation among these three factors, Gu and Johnson's instrument was also taken on board.

3.3.2.1. The *Student Vocabulary Learning Strategies Questionnaire (SVLSQ)*

As previously stated, the items included in this questionnaire were generated from those designed by Horwitz's BALLI (1987), Schmidt and Watanabe's questionnaire (2001), Oxford's SILL (1990) and Gu and Johnson (1996), as well as from Schmitt's taxonomy. However, some of them were either devised by the researcher or adapted to meet the requirements of the research purposes; otherwise, our questionnaire would have been extremely long.

The *Student Vocabulary Learning Strategies Questionnaire*, from now on SVLSQ, contains 101 items, structured into three main sections:

◆ Section 1. Personal Data: After a brief explanation on the aim of the SVLSQ, respondents were asked to provide demographic information that might be useful for establishing comparative variables, such as name¹⁵, gender, age, grade, period of study of English and educational institution.

◆ Section 2. Beliefs about Vocabulary Learning: This section was inspired by Gu and Johnson (1996) and Schmidt and Watanabe (2001), together with some general statements extracted from Horwitz's BALLI (1987) applied to the process of vocabulary learning. It included 34 closed questions subcategorised into 5 types of beliefs: motivation for learning EFL, learner profile¹⁶, ideas related to linguistic aspects, how EFL vocabulary is learnt¹⁷, how EFL vocabulary should be taught including how EFL vocabulary learning should be assessed.

A Likert scale was used so that responses could readily be quantified and analysed. Students were required to rate each item on a 5-point scale by selecting the option of their choice (1, 2, 3, 4, 5). Following Norbert Schmitt's advice¹⁸, these five responses were not assigned a particular value, so as to avoid the "so-feared" 3, normally standing for "no opinion". On the contrary, they were devised

¹⁵ They were explained that both the VLT and the SVLSQ would be correlated, so they should use the same name in the test and the questionnaire. Nevertheless, they were also told that they could use a pseudonym if they wanted to.

¹⁶ Both parts adapted from Schmidt and Watanabe (2001)

¹⁷ Section adapted from Gu and Johnson (1996)

¹⁸ The researcher held an interview with both Ronald Carter and Norbert Schmitt during her stay as visiting scholar at the University of Nottingham in October 2003. There, several issues concerning her study were discussed and she carefully considered the advice provided by these two scholars in the design and administration of these research instruments.

as a continuum where 1 stood for “absolutely disagree”, and 5 stood for “absolutely agree”. At the end, an open question was added so that the learners could provide qualitative data on their beliefs about vocabulary learning.

◆ Section 3. Vocabulary Learning Strategies: As for this last section, it followed the structure of Schmitt’s *Taxonomy of Vocabulary Learning Strategies* (1997), that is, strategies for the discovery of a new word’s meaning and strategies for the consolidation of the word once it has been encountered. It should be underlined that Schmitt used this main division as the basic structure; however, all the strategies were subsequently classified following Oxford’s description of learning strategies: determination (originally devised by Schmitt), social, memory, cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies, previously explained.

Within this general framework, I decided to take into consideration Jiménez Catalán’s (2003: 56) four steps in vocabulary acquisition: “(a) to find out the meaning of unknown words, (b) to retain them in long-term memory, (c) to recall them at will, and (d) to use them in oral or written mode”. Therefore, in order to avoid overlapping of VLSs between categories (i.e. deciding whether a strategy belongs to memory or cognitive set, as explained in section 2.3.2.), the SVLSQ subcategorises vocabulary strategies into 5 main parts, including a last section adapted from Gu and Johnson devoted to metacognitive regulation: strategies used to discover and understand meaning of new words (guessing, word analysis, dictionaries, asking for help...); strategies used to store vocabulary (practice, mental associations, image and sound, revision, total physical response, taking notes...); strategies used to retrieve already stored vocabulary; strategies that

entail the use of already learnt vocabulary and, finally, metacognitive strategies used to regulate their own vocabulary learning process.

Again, students made use of a Likert scale to rate each item on a 5-point scale by circling the response (1, 2, 3, 4, 5) along a continuum according to how frequently they resorted to these items, where 1 stood for “never”, whereas 5 stood for “always”. Then, another open question was added so that the learners could add more techniques, if not mentioned, or clarify their use of vocabulary learning strategies. Apart from that, a last question asked students whether they were willing to hold an interview on the topic. If so, they should provide a contact telephone or e-mail address to be called later on.

All the items included in the SVLSQ were checked for their internal reliability. *Cronbach’s alpha* is a well-known coefficient that estimates the proportion of variance that is systematic or consistent in a set of test scores. Bearing in mind that, by convention, the cut-off point is .60, alpha (α) should be at least .70 to be considered a reliable scale.

The *Cronbach Alpha* scores (n=95) obtained for the SVLSQ were of .90, subcategorised into the major subscales illustrated in the table below. Roughly speaking, the scores obtained suggest a fair internal consistency.

Table 19: Internal reliability of SVLSQ

Categories	Nº items	Reliability
Ideas about vocabulary learning	34	$\alpha = .69$
Vocabulary learning strategies: meaning comprehension / discovery	20	$\alpha = .75$
Vocabulary learning strategies: storage into memory	26	$\alpha = .84$
Vocabulary learning strategies: memory retrieval	3	$\alpha = .72$
Vocabulary learning strategies: vocabulary use	4	$\alpha = .58$
Metacognitive learning strategies	6	$\alpha = .71$

Finally, it should be noted that this questionnaire was first designed in English and then translated into Galician (see Appendices). Questionnaires and interviews were conducted in Galician to ensure their comprehension (especially in the case of less proficient learners) in the hope of a correct understanding and clarification when necessary.

3.3.2.2. The *Teacher Vocabulary Learning Strategies Questionnaire (TVLSQ)*

The counterpart of the SVLSQ was the *Teacher Vocabulary Learning Strategies Questionnaire*, from now on TVLSQ, aimed at gathering data from the other side of the learning process, that is, teachers. It shared the same structure as that of the SVLSQ, with a difference regarding the number of items, 45 of them in this case, also subcategorised into three main sections:

- ◆ Section 1. Personal Data: Again, after a brief explanation on the aim of the TVLSQ, respondents were asked to provide personal details, such as name, gender, age, grade, years teaching English and educational institution.
- ◆ Section 2. Beliefs about Vocabulary Learning: This section contained exactly the same items as those included in the SVLSQ, employing the same Likert scale to

rate them, but adapted to their teaching experience. For example, with regards to the motivational aspects of vocabulary learning, they were asked not about their own experience as learners, but about their pupils' motivations, so as to check whether their impressions as teachers and their pupils' responses were the same or different. The remaining sections, that is, linguistic aspects, how EFL vocabulary is learnt, how EFL vocabulary should be taught and how EFL vocabulary learning should be assessed were exactly the same in both questionnaires.

Just as was the case with students, an ending open question allowed teachers to provide qualitative data on their ideas about vocabulary learning.

◆ Section 3. Vocabulary Learning Strategies: This section was very different from that of the SVLSQ. First, teachers were offered an explanation on the concept of learning strategies throughout the process of vocabulary learning, namely, discovery/ understanding vocabulary meaning, vocabulary storage, vocabulary retrieval, vocabulary use and self-regulation. Then, teachers were asked to rate how frequently they thought their students made use of vocabulary learning strategies during each of the aforementioned stages. Finally, teachers were offered the opportunity both to explain in detail learning techniques and to give their opinion about their vocabulary teaching experience, assuming they could comment on these issues in depth. They were also asked to hold an interview on the topic and, if they were willing to do it, to provide a contact telephone or e-mail address to be called later on.

The TVLSQ was also checked for its internal reliability. The *Cronbach Alpha* scores (n=39) obtained for this research instrument were of .78, which can be

considered a good indicator of its reliability. The major sub-scales obtained the following scores:

Table 20: Internal reliability of TVLSQ

Categories	Nº items	Reliability
Ideas about vocabulary learning	34	$\alpha = .73$
Vocabulary learning strategies	5	$\alpha = .83$

It is worth mentioning that the main reason for using the TVLSQ in this study was to either confirm or reject the results obtained from students. This questionnaire was distributed among volunteering teachers from the four provinces, so it could be regarded as representative of the whole Galician territory and thus to reflect the ideas of Galician teachers.

3.3.3. The Interviews

As for the third research instrument used in the present study, that is, the interview, it was defined by David Nunan as “the elicitation of data by one person from another through person-to person encounters” (1992: 231). Apart from the traditional face-to-face encounters, with the arrival of the new technologies, this research data-elicitation instrument broadens its scope to include telephone interviews and Internet or Web-based interview techniques.

Moreover, personal interviews offer a series of advantages over questionnaires, as appointed by Li (2004: 144-145):

- i. Interviewees normally adopt a more serious approach than in questionnaires, resulting in more precise information.
- ii. Respondents have fewer opportunities to omit questions.

iii. Ambiguities and misunderstandings can be avoided, since the interviewer can clarify possible doubts and questions or even change the items if necessary.

iv. Answers can be completed, if necessary, and are immediate.

v. Both researcher and interviewee have the opportunity to go into in-depth explanations. Besides, the characteristics of the respondent can be assessed (tone of voice, facial expression, hesitation...);

vi. Finally, interviews can be a follow-up to questionnaires, for they may provide insights to interpret responses to questionnaires

On the other hand, personal interviews may cause researchers to cope with the following disadvantages:

i. Respondents may be biased due to a tendency to please or impress, create false personal image or end interview quickly.

ii. The recording of the interview may have an intimidating effect on the respondent, who may feel under pressure or embarrassed if personal questions are addressed.

iii. Even though data obtained in the interviews are said to be in-depth, this may also pose a problem when statistically analysing them.

iv. Finally, interviews can be time-consuming, since they have to be set up and ask for a set of questions, and more difficult to administer than questionnaires, due to geographic limitations.

Conversely, respondents are nowadays familiar with telephone interviews, which enable a researcher to gather information rapidly. Like personal interviews, they are endowed with some advantages, namely, they allow for some personal

contact between the interviewer and the respondent, so help can be given to the respondent if necessary. Besides, they are cheaper and quicker to conduct than personal ones and, since they are not face-to-face interactions, they allow the interviewee a greater degree of intimacy, which may reduce their bias. In fact, recent research has resorted to telephone semi-structured interviews in the USA and the EU to a fair degree of success, as is the case of Morgan, Dinsdag and Saenger (1998), or Hauck and Hurd (2005).

Nevertheless, they also have some major disadvantages. In order to set up or to hold an interview, repeated calls are inevitable (respondents may be busy, communication breakdowns...), so time is wasted. Also, more straightforward questions are required, because of the lack of visual aids to clarify questions, and interviewees have little time to think, which may end in short answers or even imitation of interviewer last words. Finally, interviews cannot be extremely long or people may feel imposed upon.

Apart from that, Nunan (1992) identified several types of interviews, differentiated by their degree of explicitness and structure:

✂ Structured interview: this type is based on a carefully worded schedule defined from the beginning and presented to the interviewee. No elaboration is allowed and they frequently require short responses with the answer being ticked off.

✂ Semi-structured interview: the interview is focused by asking specific and defined questions determined beforehand, but with scope both for the interviewer and respondent to elaborate the question/answer at length.

✂ Unstructured interview: This is also called an in-depth interview, where the interviewee is encouraged to talk freely. The interviewer uses an unstructured format, the subsequent direction of the interview being determined by the respondent's initial reply. The interviewer then probes for elaboration, without a pre-planned schedule.

The majority of studies on language learning strategies have selected the semi-structured interview to elicit data. Just to mention some of them, Cohen and Hosenfeld (1981) discovered that good readers use reading strategies different from bad ones, concluding that thinking aloud and introspective procedures are valuable means of identifying reading strategies, although they must be treated with care, for the whole process may modify students' use of them. Later on, Wenden (1987) employed the semi-structured interview procedure for the investigation of ESL students' learning strategies. More recently, Peacock and Ho (2003) carried out a study of Hong Kong students' learning strategies across eight disciplines combining Oxford's SILL and semi-structured interviews. Also Li (2004) and Taga (2000) conducted studies about learning strategies in China using this type of interview.

In any case, interviews were used in this study to complement questionnaires. They might allow teachers and learners to provide more in-depth information which was not addressed in the questionnaires.

3.3.3.1. Students' interviews

As previously stated, the purpose of the interviews was to gain complementary information to that obtained from the questionnaires. Based on the results

obtained in previous research (Fernández-Carril, 2004), the format selected was semi-structured, that is, it consisted of specific and defined questions determined beforehand; however, interviewees were allowed a considerable degree of freedom. I acknowledged that a less-structured interview format would, no doubt, permit a wider and more extensive type of replies; nevertheless, the analysis of data would become extremely difficult.

The duration of these interviews ranged from fifteen to twenty minutes, bearing in mind that students were offered a brief explanation on the purpose of the interview, its content and procedure beforehand. Then, the interviewer proceeded to gather personal data (gender, age, grade, years of study of English and educational institution), necessary to establish comparative variables.

The interview planning was divided into two parts. The first section consisted of the elicitation from the informants of ideas related to the process of learning vocabulary in a foreign language.

There were 12 items conceived as open questions that were formulated to obtain further information about specific aspects of vocabulary learning, such as willingness, motivation, difficulties, self-confidence, learning techniques, teacher's role and what they understood by learning strategies.

As for the last section of the interview, it was aimed at gathering data on clarifying the strategies that students claimed in the questionnaire. Thus, interviewees were required to verbalise orally what they did when they went through the process of vocabulary learning, namely, to discover and understand the meaning of new words, to store vocabulary, to retrieve already stored

vocabulary and to use this new vocabulary. Finally, they were also asked whether they planned or regulated their own learning process.

Once again, items were designed as open questions so that learners could reflect upon the mental process they underwent in the aforementioned situations, in a sort of think-aloud procedure. Nevertheless, to do so, some prompts, as a means of clarification or illustration, were suggested by the researcher. A last and completely open question was reserved for any further comments or any question students wished to make. The whole range of questions for the students' interview is presented in Appendices 10 and 11.

3.3.3.2. Teachers' interviews

The interview format selected for gathering qualitative data from teachers was exactly the same as that employed with students. The main reason for this decision is that, apart from eliciting more elaborated answers from respondents, I also wanted to compare the results obtained in both interviews.

In this light, teachers' interview also consisted of two units. The first one was made up of the same 12 open questions about teachers' opinions regarding the vocabulary learning process, namely, students' willingness, motivation, difficulties and self-confidence when learning EFL vocabulary. Besides, they were inquired about successful vocabulary learning techniques, their role as teachers in building up students' vocabulary and whether they were previously acquainted with the concept of learning strategies.

Finally, teachers were asked to describe the vocabulary learning strategies used by their pupils throughout the whole process (from the first encounter of a

word to its automatic use). Then, they were also encouraged to respond whether students got involved into the learning process. At the end of the interview they were also given the opportunity to add further remarks from their teaching experience, assuring them that they were extremely valuable for our research (cf. Appendices 12 and 13 for teachers' full interview schedule).

3.4. Procedures

No single research of the kind dared to employ the elicitation instruments designed without piloting them first on, at least, a small number of subjects. With regard to the questionnaires, Dörnyei (2003: 67) argues that due to the potential problems in the use and design of the research tools, researchers should carry out a pilot probe:

There is only one way to find out: by administering the questionnaire to a group of respondents who are in every way similar to the target population the instrument was designed for. This is usually an "undeclared" pretest whereby the respondents are not told that this is a questionnaire under construction.

Therefore, for the purpose of the present study, a pilot research was carried out to check whether the items included both in questionnaires and interviews were useful to elicit the expected data. This section will provide, on the one hand, a complete account of the procedures adopted in the piloting, focusing on specific features which had to be modified to make our research tools more suitable to the goals of our investigation.

3.4.1. The pilot Study

This pilot study was carried out in March-April 2004 at two educational institutions located in Santiago de Compostela. It was organised in two phases: first, I collected data from secondary school students and teachers. Then, their University counterpart subjects were invited to collaborate. Figure 13 shows the distribution and number of subjects participating in this pilot study.

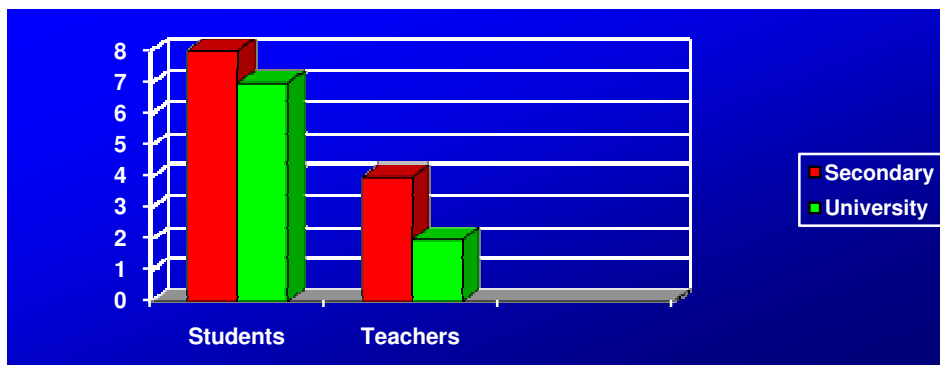


Figure 13: Number and distribution of participants in the pilot study

3.4.1.1. Pilot study procedure

Since the participants included in this sample had to belong to the same grade as those selected for the main study, they were divided into four groups according to their grade, namely, beginners (3rd year ESO), lower-intermediate (2nd year BAC), upper-intermediate (3rd year English Philology) and advanced (5th year English Philology).

We contacted a secondary school, that is, IES Antonio Fraguas Fraguas¹⁹. Eight students from both grades taking a course offered by the School of Languages

¹⁹ We are deeply in gratitude with Carmen Fernández Santás who made the collection of these data possible

(EOI) also volunteered to answer the questionnaire. They were all classmates during the academic year, which facilitated enormously my work. So, in one session, after a brief explanation on the purpose of this tool, they were asked to answer the questionnaire. They were also encouraged to express any doubts or questions they had.

As expected, it took about 50 minutes to be completed. During this time, the researcher sat behind them so as to make them feel comfortable and not interfere with them. I also took notes on the difficulties students came across and the items they did not understand in order to modify them later for the main study.

After the questionnaire, we set up an interview with one of the students, who was willing to collaborate. Thus, the interview was conducted immediately after the questionnaire. After a brief introduction, where the researcher put forth its aim and explained that the session was being taped-recorded only for research purposes, the interaction took place. It was ten minutes long. The language used was Galician, the mother tongue of both interviewer and interviewee. Again, the researcher had the opportunity to take notes on students' remarks, comments and questions about the wording of interview items for subsequent reformulation.

In parallel to this and in order to gather a sample from the other side of the learning spectrum, four secondary school volunteer teachers who belonged to the same high school were also administered a questionnaire. Contrary to students, they were given the questionnaire to be completed in their own time since I

wanted to give them enough time so that they could reflect upon the questions contained in the questionnaire. They were encouraged to make any comments, write questions and remarks (either positive or negative) about the items so that I could have a real critical opinion about the research tool, one of the main goals of this pilot study.

As for the interview, I decided to test the telephone procedure, so I set up the interview with one of the secondary education teachers. It was conducted in Spanish²⁰ and lasted about twenty minutes. Again, the researcher paid attention to remarks, opinions and questions provided by the teacher about interview questions.

Once these instruments were tested in the secondary school environment, I turned to the University of Santiago de Compostela. This sample was composed of 3 students in their 3rd year of English philology who were supposed to stand for upper-intermediate level of English and 4 students in their last year of this degree, who represented the advanced level (5th English Philology).

Unlike secondary school pupils, it was impossible to meet them all at the same time due to schedule problems. Thus, they were given the questionnaire in class time²¹ to be completed on their own. Again, they were encouraged to comment on any items they found difficult to understand and to add any remarks they considered relevant.

²⁰ The interviewee decided the language of the interview, either Galician or Spanish. The main idea was that respondents were able to express their opinions freely, so feeling comfortable with the vehicular language is very important.

²¹ I am extremely grateful to Dr. Ignacio Palacios for administering the questionnaire in his class.

Later on, one of these volunteer students was contacted to be interviewed. I conducted the interview exactly the same as before. It took 15 minutes and was also tape-recorded.

Collaboration was also sought among the professionals teaching at the Department of English Philology (University of Santiago de Compostela). Two university lecturers volunteered for this study. We elicited questionnaire data in the same way as I did with secondary school teachers. Remarks and comments on the questionnaire items were welcomed.

Once all the data were collected, the information was processed and analysed using the ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) statistical test. The main purpose of this analysis was twofold: first, it could draw a comparison between the results collected from learners and teachers. Second, and more important, it could check the validity of our research instruments.

3.4.1.2. Pilot study results

In this section, the data gathered from the questionnaires will be outlined²², starting by the results provided by students and continuing with the information elicited from their teachers.

Roughly speaking, it could be argued that students did not possess strong opinions about vocabulary learning. In Table 21, where **N** stands for the total number of subjects under study, **X** represents the mean obtained for a particular item, **SD** stands for Standard Deviation and **SE** stands for Standard Error, it can be

²² For a more detailed account of these findings, see Fernández-Carril (2005).

seen that for 15 out of 30 items, their mean value was within the range of “3”,²³ which could be said to represent a medium scope.

Generally speaking, they did not consider English vocabulary as difficult to learn and it was credited to be an important aspect of language learning. Nevertheless, they had a moderate knowledge of how vocabulary is learnt. They only reported negative values towards rote memorisation of words, whilst the score for guessing words in context and vocabulary use was considerably higher. It is worth remarking that the results were pretty close to those presented in Gu and Johnson’s study (1996).

If we move on to vocabulary teaching aspects, the scores obtained were even less specific: the only idea they seemed to be sure of was that words should not be presented in isolation which, to a greater extent, made them undervalue word lists. Moreover, high scores were attributed to the importance of vocabulary learning strategies use, which should be kept in mind by their teachers. As for the way vocabulary learning should be assessed, their opinion was again not totally clear-cut although they seemed to be against vocabulary tests.

²³ As previously stated (cf. Section 2.2.2.1), the Likert scale used ranged from 1 (absolutely disagree) to 5 (absolutely agree)

Table 21: Students' beliefs about vocabulary learning (pilot study)

ITEM N ^o	ITEM DESCRIPTION	N	X	SD	SE
6	English vocabulary is difficult to learn.	15	2.80	1.08	.28
7	Learning a FL is essentially learning its vocabulary.	15	2.07	1.28	.33
8	In FL learning, vocabulary is less important than grammar.	15	1.73	.70	.18
9	Vocabulary constitutes a structured framework easy to describe.	15	2.53	.92	.24
10	Vocabulary makes sense only embedded in a particular context.	14	3.64	1.28	.34
11	The culture of a community is inevitably reflected in its vocabulary.	15	3.27	.88	.23
12	Learning vocabulary is a hard task and takes a lot of effort.	15	3.13	1.13	.29
13	Vocabulary is mainly learnt through reading.	15	3.67	1.18	.30
14	Anyone can improve his vocabulary simply by reading a lot.	15	3.80	1.27	.33
15	Vocabulary must be completely learnt by means of self-learning.	15	2.13	.99	.26
16	Learning vocabulary can only be achieved through memorisation of words.	15	1.67	.62	.16
17	Repetition is the best way to remember new words.	15	2.40	.99	.25
18	Vocabulary must only be learnt in a particular context.	15	3.20	1.32	.34
19	Guessing word meaning in context is the best way to learn vocabulary.	15	4.07	.70	.18
20	A word is learnt when students see its use several times in different contexts.	15	3.87	.83	.22
21	Attention should be paid to words that usually go with a particular word.	15	4.53	.64	.17
22	Words should be used before being finally learnt.	15	3.60	1.12	.29
23	Using a language (listening, writing, reading, speaking) is more important than memorising single words.	15	4.73	.46	.12
24	Words are learnt after using them.	15	4.33	.62	.16
25	Vocabulary does ask for systematic teaching of meanings and forms.	14	3.21	1.05	.28
26	Words should not be introduced in isolation, but organised in groups (names, verbs...)	15	4.00	1.13	.29
27	The minimum a learner should know about a word is its form, meaning and basic use.	15	3.73	1.03	.27
28	Analysing word structure is very important.	15	3.07	1.03	.27
29	Teachers should select a list of words so that their students can learn it.	15	2.33	1.23	.32
30	Teachers' role is mainly explaining word meaning in its context of occurrence.	15	3.27	1.34	.35
31	Teachers' role consists mainly in providing students with strategies to understand word meaning and memorising it.	15	4.27	.96	.25
32	Teachers' role consists mainly in providing students with strategies to guess word meaning in context of occurrence.	15	3.93	.96	.25
33	Out-of-context vocabulary teaching must be completed with in-context teaching.	15	3.60	1.24	.32
34	Vocabulary tests should be based on lists of frequent words.	15	3.00	1.00	.26
35	Vocabulary tests as such should not be used to assess vocabulary knowledge.	14	2.64	1.34	.36

The third part of the questionnaire was concerned with the use of vocabulary learning strategies. In general terms, students seemed to resort to this kind of

learning strategies to a medium extent (on a 5-point scale, ranging from Almost Never (1) to Almost Always (5), they scored 3.05).

As illustrated in Figure 14, and contrary to our expectations, the type of strategies reported to be most frequently used were those included in the category of meta-cognitive regulation, that is, strategies that assist students to establish learning goals, to plan learning and to regulate their own learning process (mean=3.31). The second most valued set was that of strategies that help to discover and understand the meaning of new words (3.17), and amongst them, strategies for guessing meaning (3.57) and dictionary use (3.45) were the most popular. Finally, the least frequently used vocabulary strategies were those dealing with using already learnt vocabulary (2.94), strategies for retrieving words from memory when needed (2.87) and, lastly, storage into memory strategies (2.52), which were moderately popular among our sample students.

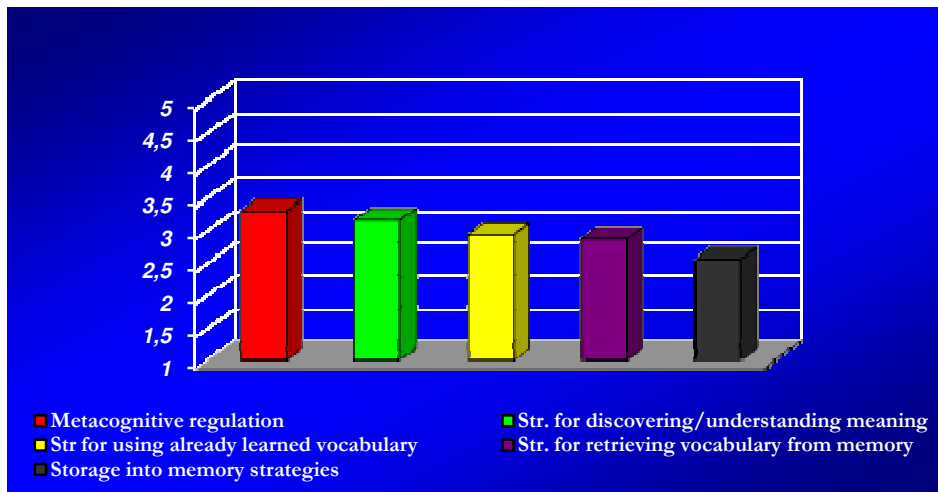


Figure 14: VLSs employed by Galician EFL learners (pilot study)

When comparing the results obtained in both sections, namely, beliefs about vocabulary and vocabulary learning strategies, some correlations among them

could be drawn. For example, learners reported the strategy of guessing word meaning in context as one of the best ways to learn vocabulary and rote memorisation one of the worst, which is reflected in their use of strategies for guessing or discovering meaning, and the lower scores obtained for storage into memory strategies.

Furthermore, it is curious to find that although learners considered learning strategies important in the process of vocabulary learning, they did not seem to employ them very frequently.

The subjects selected to represent the other side of the learning continuum, that is, the teachers' perspective, reported clearer ideas than those of their students, since only for 4 out of 30 statements were scored with a means of 3 (medium value). They coincided with learners in stating that English vocabulary is not difficult to learn and in considering vocabulary an important aspect of language learning. They also showed a strong belief in the fact that the culture of a particular community is reflected in its vocabulary, which apparently was not perceived as such by their students.

Roughly speaking, teachers reported very negative values towards rote memorisation of words and very high scores for guessing words in context and vocabulary use, which were in keeping with the results obtained from learners.

They were also quite confident about vocabulary teaching techniques. They clearly rejected presenting words in isolation and subsequently, lists of words, matching the data gathered from students. They reported highly positive answers towards the importance of learning in context, aspects of knowing a word, other

than meaning and, finally, learning strategies. Furthermore, they felt insecure about how to assess vocabulary.

Table 22: Teachers' beliefs about vocabulary learning (pilot study)

ITEM Nº	ITEM DESCRIPTION	N	X	SD	SE
6	English vocabulary is difficult to learn.	6	2.83	1,17	0,48
7	Learning a FL is essentially learning its vocabulary.	6	3.00	1,26	0,52
8	In FL learning, vocabulary is less important than grammar.	6	2.33	1,21	0,49
9	Vocabulary constitutes a structured framework easy to describe.	6	2.83	1,17	0,48
10	Vocabulary makes sense only embedded in a particular context.	6	4.83	0,41	0,17
11	The culture of a community is inevitably reflected in its vocabulary.	6	4.67	0,52	0,21
12	Learning vocabulary is a hard task and takes a lot of effort.	6	3.33	1,03	0,42
13	Vocabulary is mainly learnt through reading.	6	4.33	0,52	0,21
14	Anyone can improve their vocabulary simply by reading a lot.	6	4.50	0,55	0,22
15	Vocabulary must be completely learnt by means of self-learning.	6	4.17	0,41	0,17
16	Learning vocabulary can only be achieved through memorisation of words.	6	1.50	0,55	0,22
17	Repetition is the best way to remember new words.	6	2.83	0,75	0,31
18	Vocabulary must only be learnt in a particular context.	6	4.17	1,17	0,48
19	Guessing word meaning in context is the best way to learn vocabulary.	6	4.67	0,52	0,21
20	A word is learnt when students see its use several times in different contexts	6	4.17	0,75	0,31
21	Attention should be paid to words that usually go with a particular word.	6	4.33	0,52	0,21
22	Words should be used before being finally learnt.	6	3.83	0,98	0,40
23	Using a language (listening, writing, reading, speaking) is more important than memorising single words.	6	5.00	0,00	0,00
24	Words are learnt after using them.	6	4.50	0,55	0,22
25	Vocabulary does ask for systematic teaching of meanings and forms.	5	2.40	1,14	0,51
26	Words should not be introduced in isolation, but organised in groups (names, verbs...)	5	4.00	1,00	0,45
27	The minimum a learner should know about a word is form, meaning and basic use.	5	4.00	1,41	0,63
28	Analysing word structure is very important.	4	4.25	0,96	0,48
29	Teachers should select a list of words that their students can learn it.	6	2.67	0,82	0,33
30	Teachers' role is mainly explaining word meaning in its context of occurrence.	6	2.67	1,37	0,56
31	Teachers' role consists mainly in providing students with strategies to understand word meaning and memorising it.	6	4.33	1,21	0,49
32	Teachers' role consists mainly in providing students with strategies to guess word meaning in context of occurrence.	6	4.33	1,03	0,42
33	Out-of-context vocabulary teaching must be completed with in-context teaching.	5	4.60	0,55	0,24
34	Vocabulary tests should be based on lists of frequent words.	5	2.20	1,30	0,58
35	Vocabulary tests as such should not be used to assess vocabulary.	5	3.50	1,52	0,68

Teachers were not very positive on students' use of vocabulary learning strategies. Indeed, they scored students' use of the aforementioned strategies slightly lower than students themselves (Mean=2.99 versus 3.05 reported by learners). In fact, both groups of respondents showed discrepancies with regard to which set of vocabulary strategies were the most frequently used, as illustrated in the figure below:

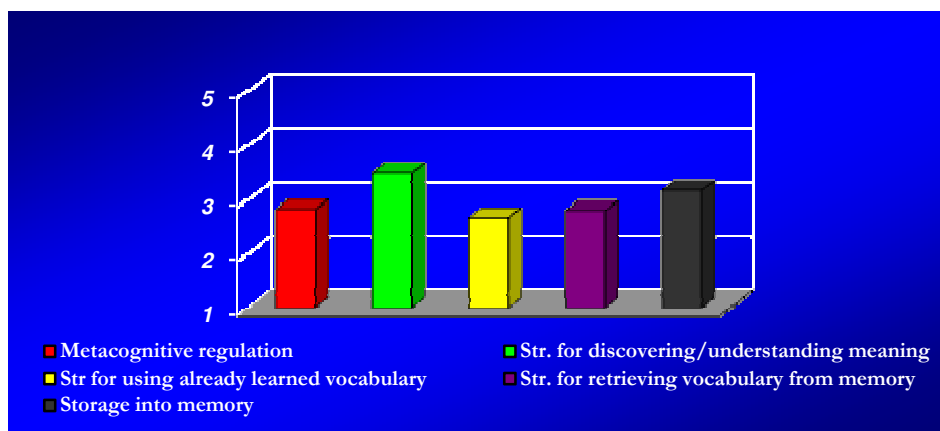


Figure 15: VLSs perceived by Galician EFL teachers (pilot study)

In general terms, teachers coincided with students: they credited learners to employ learning strategies to guess and discover the meaning of new words quite frequently (3.5). Students were also reported to resort to strategies moderately when retrieving words from memory (2.8) and using already learnt vocabulary (2.67).

Nevertheless, the main discrepancy arose from the fact that teachers did not think that learners claimed to play an active role in the process of vocabulary learning, because students reported using metacognitive strategies to a higher extent than they gave them credit for. In fact, teachers scored learners' use of this

set of strategies with an average mean of 2.83, in contrast with an index of 3.31 reported by learners.

The case of storage into memory strategies is just the opposite: teachers assumed that students employed strategies for memorising terms more frequently than they actually did, whereas learners assigned more negative values to rote learning strategies. Finally, it is worth mentioning that piloting the interview schedule for both students and learners was aimed mainly to diagnose potential problems and questions difficult to understand. Students were able to follow the personal and telephone interview without serious problems and this was also the case for teachers. However, the researcher had the impression, especially with students, that some questions were too general and should be narrowed down to refer to the points at issue.

As mentioned in the objectives of this study, the main goal of this experience was piloting the research instruments that would be used in the main investigation: the questionnaire and the interview, both the learners' and the teachers' version. Despite the fact that it was a small sample, the administration of the questionnaire provided me with an insight into those difficulties subjects could come across in the main study. They proved to need some readjustments in certain items, because they turned out to be difficult to understand, especially for younger learners. This led me to change several items that will be accounted for in the next section.

As far as the interview is concerned, even if it offered the expected kind of information, it took too much guidance on the part of the interviewer. Some of

the open questions were too broad, so I decided to split them into more specific ones. In spite of the mentioned drawbacks, the pilot experiment was quite successful.

3.4.2. Amendments to the research instruments

The teachers who participated in the pilot study supported and encouraged me to continue with this research. Indeed, their remarks and suggestions were carefully taken into account in the revision and rewording of the research instruments. I came to the conclusion that some items were too technical to be properly understood, too ambitious or too general. Bearing this information in mind, these were the main amendments introduced:

3.4.2.1. SVLSQ

The learners' questionnaire for the piloting study was written in Galician and consisted of 100 items. It was also divided into 3 main sections: Personal data, beliefs about vocabulary learning and vocabulary learning strategies (*cf.* section 3.2.2). The first section coincided exactly with the final version of the questionnaire, collecting personal information that allowed me to establish the variables of the survey (sex, age, grade, years studying English and teaching institution). The second section consisted of 30 items representing several questions in connection with beliefs on language learning, such as the role of linguistic aspects, EFL vocabulary teaching and learning and assessment. Students were asked to rate each belief on a 5-point scale, ranging from *Not at All* (1) to *Definitely* (5). The last section contained 65 vocabulary learning strategies subcategorised into those employed for the comprehension of new words and

those employed for production. Learners were required to rate how frequently they used each strategy on a 5-point scale, ranging from *Never* (1) to *Always* (5).

The difference between the pilot students' questionnaire and that used in the main study is that the former was not as structured as the latter. It also consisted of three main parts but that was the only division. Moreover, the questions of the pilot study were listed trying to follow an internal order although respondents were not made aware of it and it was hard to be appreciated. Thus, I decided to apply further sub-categorisations of both ideas and vocabulary strategies in order to facilitate learners' answers.

Apart from that, some items were omitted because they were considered to be redundant, others reworded to avoid too technical definitions (for example, the concepts of keyword method or Total Physical Response) and most of them were rearranged according to the new sub-categorisations.²⁴

3.4.2.2. TVLSQ

As far as the pilot teachers' questionnaire²⁵ is concerned, no changes were introduced in sections 1 (personal data) and 3 (vocabulary learning strategies) so they contained exactly the same information included in the main study (*cf.* section 2.2.3). However, part 2, devoted to ideas about vocabulary and vocabulary learning strategies, underwent the same transformations as the questionnaire addressed to the group of students; it was my purpose to compare students' and teachers' assumptions about vocabulary.

²⁴ See appendices 1 and 2 for the students' pilot questionnaire

²⁵ See appendices 3 and 4 for the teachers' pilot questionnaire

This pilot version also contained a last 11-item section focused on the use of new technologies in the classroom. This was another aspect I wanted to research, due to the progressive presence of the so-called new technologies in the EFL classroom (specific computer software, the Internet...). Unfortunately no conclusions could be gathered, only 2 of the teachers claimed to make use of the new technologies, namely, resorting to the Internet in order to find authentic texts and to understand the meaning of new terms.

These negative findings could be interpreted as the apparent lack of interest shown by professionals towards the use of new technologies. This made me reconsider the suitability of including this issue and I, finally, decided to revise again the matter for future research.

3.4.2.3. The interview schedule

As previously stated, the questions of the pilot interview questions underwent several readjustments before being used in the main study. Originally, this interview contained 11 open questions and was not organised in different sections. First, the interviewer elicited personal data from the informant. Then, there were 4 questions concerning their ideas about vocabulary learning. However, after piloting the interview, they proved to be insufficient to gather the expected data, so more questions were added up to these originally 13 questions (cf. section 2.2.3).

The last part of the interview (only organised as such in the final version) was concerned with vocabulary learning strategies. It contained the same questions, but less elaborated, so they were somehow difficult to answer and many prompts

on the part of the interviewer were required to obtain the desired information. As a consequence, they were reworded to improve their comprehensibility.

Finally, since the issue of the new technologies was left aside for future research, I decided to disregard these two questions referring to this question. It would not make sense keeping them if they were not going to be taken into account for the main study.

3.4.3. The main study

In general terms, the procedures followed in the main study were the same as those presented in the pilot study. I decided to carry out the research in two main phases: first, at secondary schools, and then, at universities and schools of languages.

The first stage of this research took place during the 2004-2005 academic year, from October to February. Contacting high schools was extremely important so I resorted to colleagues who were also friends of mine. From all the high schools contacted, some of them were willing to cooperate and a date was set up to explain the purpose of the research and to give them instructions on how the data should be collected.

At each secondary school,²⁶ teachers were persuaded of the importance and usefulness of their collaboration for the research project. I made it clear that the data collected would be used only for investigation purposes and that this study

²⁶ We are greatly thankful to Jorge Otero and Pilar Calvo (IES Melide), Mercedes Calvo and Chelo Pedrosa (IES Arzúa), Isabel Baliñas (IES Someso), Carmen Sande and Loli Doval (IES Camilo José Cela) and Olga Suárez and Benedicta Rabuñal (IES María Casares)

was not any kind of evaluation, but a survey. Finally, they could examine the research instruments to check their contents.

SVLSQ and VLT were then taken to class and administered both by the teachers and by the researcher using 2 whole lessons (50 minutes). Students received oral instructions in Galician on how to complete the questionnaire and the test. They were told to write the same name on both instruments (a pseudonym was allowed) and were encouraged to ask questions on any items they did not understand. Apart from that, they were also informed that I needed volunteers for the interview. It was explained that their ideas and comments about vocabulary learning would be extremely helpful for this study and that their personal details would be preserved. If they were willing to do so, they had to write a name and a telephone number to be contacted later on.

The vocabulary test (VLT) was completed first and it took them about 40 minutes. Students were assured that the results obtained in the VLT would not have any influence on their final course marks. What is more, they were told that their teachers would see neither the VLT nor the SVLSQ, so that they could express themselves freely. On a subsequent session, students answered the questionnaire in about 45 minutes. Once finished, all the questionnaires were collected after the class and coded for further analyses.

The TVLSQ was also given simultaneously to participant teachers. They had time to complete it on their own because it was agreed that they could either hand them in when possible or send them by mail.

Later on, we made a list with those students and teachers who volunteered to be interviewed. Due to time restrictions, some interviews were carried out personally and others by phone since in the pilot study the latter have proved to be as efficient as the former.

This interview took place in a quiet meeting room. The interviewer and interviewee sat side by side. The language used was either Galician or Spanish: that was completely up to the interviewee. After introducing the respondent to the main purpose of the interview, they were asked for permission to be recorded. Each interview lasted between 10-15 minutes, in the case of students, and 15-30 minutes, in the case of teachers.

As far as telephone interviews were concerned, they followed the same procedures as personal interviews and they were also recorded for further transcription. That concluded the first phase of the main study.

The second phase was carried out from April 2005 to March 2006. I had already covered the sample of low-intermediate proficiency learners and needed highly proficient students. I decided to select students in their terminal years at university and Schools of Languages (EOI). Then, I sent an e-mail explaining the goals of this research to the Galician Universities and Schools of Languages teachers, asking for their collaboration. In addition to this, I also contacted the Modern Language Centre (MLC) at the University of Santiago.

After the reception of an answer from some teaching professionals²⁷ willing to co-operate, the second phase of the study was started. The procedures were the same as those adopted with the VLT, the questionnaires and the interviews at the secondary schools, although here only a session was required; class sessions tended to last longer than at high schools and students were quicker at completing both the test and the questionnaire.

Finally, and despite the great help received from our colleagues around Galicia, the teachers' sample was not large enough to render general conclusions. Thus, it was necessary to appeal for collaboration in many ways. First, I sent a massive e-mail including the *Vocabulary Teaching Questionnaire* (TVLSQ) to Secondary School, University and Schools of Languages professionals. Some of them returned the questionnaire (either by e-mail or by ordinary mail) and volunteered for the interview, which was extremely important for this study.

Apart from these technological tools, we were also present at some teaching development events, such as APIGA²⁸ seminars, university conferences and lectures and so on to find more volunteers. In fact, we can say these meetings were very important for completing our sample.

²⁷ Once again, we are greatly thankful to Victor Reynolds, Denise O'Brien and Mitch Monsein (MLC of Santiago University), Emma Lezcano and Begoña Crespo (UDC), Jorge Bueno and Begoña Jamarco (UVigo), Anabel González, M^a Carmen de la Fuente, Carla Dechant and Manuel Rodís (EOI Santiago), Patricia Ares, Elena de Pablo, Marta Ferreiro, Rubén Barderas, Anabel Fernández and Margarita Gesto (EOI Ferrol), Ana Alonso and Rosario Carracedo (EOI Lugo), Lisa Arias, Ana Ramos and Matthew Loboy (EOI Ourense).

²⁸ I must thank Paula Botas for allowing our questionnaires to be administered during their meetings and even at APIGA (Asociación de Profesores de Inglés de Galicia) centre in Santiago de Compostela.

In sum, we can say that it took a great effort, help and time to obtain the final sample. This study was carried out in normal lessons of secondary schools or language centres with the limitations that such a situation can impose on research: time and access to subjects were limited and decisions on data collection had to be made based on such restrictions, taking into account the least undue interruption to learners and the most efficient and fruitful means of data collection in the time available. Despite these limitations, results were successfully achieved.

3.5. Data analysis procedures

All the data elicited through the questionnaires, tests and interviews had to be coded, analysed and evaluated to transform them into information which could be easily interpreted. The vast majority of the data analysis techniques entailed the use of a computer both for qualitative and quantitative data.

The sample obtained from the questionnaires was coded using the SPSS 11.0 (Statistical Packages for Social Sciences), one of the most frequently used software programme in social sciences research.

The interview data were also analysed with the same statistical package but they were transcribed to facilitate the content analysis procedure in order to develop a qualitative analysis that might support the rendered conclusions.

First, a descriptive analysis was carried out to organise and summarise data and to see the overall beliefs and strategy patterns of vocabulary learning reported by the participants in the study. Both students' and teachers' data were

introduced independently into SPSS and statistical descriptions of mean, standard deviation (SD), standard error (SE), maximum and minimum values were used to obtain information about the central tendency and dispersion. Moreover, descriptive analysis was a determining factor for allocating groups of students according to the scores obtained in the VLT: advanced, upper-intermediate, lower-intermediate and beginners.

Secondly, correlation analysis were performed taking into account independent variables, such as gender, age, grade, level test, number of years devoted to the study of English and educational institution. This was aimed at verifying those factors which were believed to underlie the results obtained from teachers and learners. Furthermore, correlation analyses were drawn to test any significant connection between subjects' beliefs and reported strategies and VLT results.

Third, taking into account Li's (2004) procedure, the recording of interviews results were transcribed, focusing on stated vocabulary beliefs and strategies and factors that may have an influence upon this collected information. Just as was the case of the aforementioned research, interview analysis followed Wenden's (1987) procedure of content analysis specifically adapted for this study.

Finally, a comparative study between students' and teachers' data was carried out so as to find out whether these results could illustrate a lack of understanding between the two ends of the teaching continuum or not. Moreover, these two groups of subjects were selected to be as representative as possible of the Galician EFL community so that our findings could be generalised.

All the aforementioned data analysis methods will be explained in detail and illustrated with actual data in the following chapters.

Chapter 4

Results

Chapter 4

Results

4.1. Quantitative data analysis

Chapter four describes and analyses the quantitative data gathered from the administration of both the *Student Vocabulary Learning Strategies Questionnaire* (SVLSQ) and the *Teacher Vocabulary Learning Strategies Questionnaire* (TVLSQ).

It presents, firstly, the overall beliefs about vocabulary and, secondly, the reported vocabulary strategy use of learners in terms of the given variables, namely, age, gender, teaching institution and EFL learning/teaching experience, so as to determine whether these background factors have an influence upon the aforementioned vocabulary aspects. It also illustrates students' patterns of relations found between beliefs, learning strategies and vocabulary outcomes as measured by the *Vocabulary Levels Test* (VLT).

Later on, the second group of subjects, that is, the teachers, will undergo the same analysis: first, their ideas about vocabulary and then the vocabulary learning strategies they credit their pupils use.

The data elicitation procedures were already described in the previous chapter (cf. section 3.5), i.e. descriptive correlations and One-way ANOVA analysis. The results obtained will be presented separately in this section, starting by learners and continuing with the analysis of the teachers' sample.

4.1.1. Results of the SVLSQ

As previously mentioned, this questionnaire contained three parts: Part 1 (personal information), Part 2 (beliefs about vocabulary) and Part 3 (vocabulary learning strategies employed). The latter two contained closed questions that had to be answered using a 5-point Likert scale. Furthermore, they also included an open question at the end of each section, where students could add some further comments and remarks about their learning experience.

In this light, students' ideas about the process of vocabulary learning will be firstly presented. Next, a complete account of the vocabulary strategies reported will be provided.

4.1.1.1. Students' beliefs about vocabulary: descriptive statistics

Part 2 of the SVLSQ was entirely devoted to elicit students' ideas on vocabulary learning. This questionnaire, adapted from Horwitz's BALLI (1987), Gu and Johnson (1996) and Schmidt and Watanabe (2001), included 34 items subcategorised into 5 main groups of beliefs in accordance with their topic: motivation, linguistic aspects, EFL vocabulary learning, EFL vocabulary teaching and vocabulary assessment.

They could not be considered as truly subscales because items were of heterogeneous nature; this means that within the same general category of beliefs, items were very different in nature. For example, within the first category, motivation, consisting of 5 statements, the first two items dealt with students' liking of the language and the next three ones were related to specific reasons for learning vocabulary. That was why this section of beliefs about vocabulary was

taken as a whole when the reliability analysis was carried out, instead of talking about well-defined subscales.

Students were required to rate each statement using a 5-point Likert scale (from 1 “absolutely disagree” to 5 “absolutely agree”). Once the results were processed with the use of the SPSS 11.0 software, the descriptive statistics for each category were obtained (Table 23).

The first column in this table indicates the item number in the questionnaire. The second stands for the belief statement that had to be rated. It must here be noted that some items were abbreviated for space reasons.²⁹ Finally, **N** stands for the total number of subjects under study, **X** represents the mean obtained for a particular item (between 1 and 5), **SD** stands for standard deviation (it describes how data in a sample vary from its mean) and, finally, **SE** stands for standard error (understood as the extent to which the mean of scores obtained from a sample differs from the true mean score of the whole population). From this point on, tables used in representing scores will include the aforementioned elements.

As for the means values, we will take Oxford’s (1990: 291) definition of mean scores on a scale from 1 to 5, i.e. scores from 3,5 to 5,0 are considered as “high”, scores from 2,5 to 3,4 as “medium” and those from 1,0 to 2,4 are regarded as “low”.

With these scale values in mind, it is clear that there were significant differences between the average mean scores found along the five categories of beliefs, ranging from high (mean= 4.57) to low (2.27).

²⁹ For a full account, see Appendices 6 and 7

Table 23: Students' beliefs about vocabulary learning

ITEM N °	ITEM DESCRIPTION	N	X	SD	SE
7	I like learning vocabulary.	711	3,82	1,114	,04
8	I like using vocabulary outside the classroom.	708	3,69	1,225	,05
9	I learn English because it is useful to find a good job.	708	3,78	1,213	,05
10	I learn English because it is useful to understand movies, songs, videogames, etc.	708	3,36	1,233	,05
11	I learn English because it is useful to communicate with foreign friends/relatives.	704	3,59	1,302	,05
12	I am good at learning vocabulary.	707	3,13	1,100	,04
13	I do not know enough vocabulary.	707	2,83	1,109	,04
14	I get anxious when trying to speak English.	707	3,26	1,305	,05
15	I give up studying vocabulary if it is too difficult.	702	2,27	1,217	,05
16	I give up studying vocabulary if it is too boring.	710	2,75	1,322	,05
17	I make a great effort to learn vocabulary.	711	3,15	1,028	,04
18	The culture of a community is reflected in its vocabulary.	700	3,85	1,079	,04
19	Learning a FL is essentially learning its vocabulary.	707	2,67	1,205	,05
20	Vocabulary is less important than other aspects of the language.	708	2,34	1,058	,04
21	English vocabulary is difficult to learn.	712	2,81	1,108	,04
22	Self-learning is the best way to learn vocabulary.	704	3,11	1,114	,04
23	Vocabulary is essentially learnt by reading.	708	3,17	1,072	,04
24	Vocabulary can only be learnt in context.	701	2,86	1,239	,05
25	You can learn vocabulary only by encountering a word in different contexts.	707	3,84	1,029	,04
26	Guessing word meaning in context is the best way to learn new words.	701	3,50	1,148	,04
27	You can only learn vocabulary by memorising individual words.	709	2,61	1,233	,05
28	Collocations and sets of phrases are very important in vocabulary learning.	707	3,96	,891	,03
29	Using vocabulary is more important than memorising words.	710	4,57	,766	,03
30	The minimum a student should know is word meaning and basic usage.	707	4,02	1,011	,04
31	Vocabulary asks for clear and systematic teaching.	705	3,87	1,029	,04
32	Words must not be presented in isolation but in groups.	706	3,72	1,170	,04
33	It is important to pay attention to word structure.	701	3,58	,981	,04
34	Out-of-context teaching must be completed with in-context teaching.	697	3,87	,943	,04
35	Teachers should create word lists for students.	703	3,30	1,261	,05
36	Teachers' role: explaining word meaning in context.	704	3,04	1,231	,05
37	Teachers' role: providing students with learning strategies.	703	4,16	,924	,03
38	Vocabulary tests are acceptable.	707	3,65	1,147	,04
39	Tests must be based on frequency lists.	705	3,06	1,239	,05
40	Tests must be based on usefulness of words rather than on frequency.	702	3,56	1,001	,04

The first category of beliefs tackled the issue of motivation for EFL vocabulary learning. Throughout 5 statements, students were asked about different motivational issues. Thus, they claimed they liked learning and using vocabulary

(Means= 3.82 and 3.69, respectively). Roughly speaking, they considered that learning EFL vocabulary would help them in their future jobs (M=3.78) and to communicate with foreign people (M=3.59). However, the instrumental use of vocabulary for understanding materials of their interest (films, videogames and so on) was rated with lower figures than those obtained for the previous items (M=3.36).

The second group of beliefs, that is, learner profile, was concerned with students' self-perception as learners together with the effort they made to learn vocabulary. As for their self-perception as learners, they considered themselves as moderately good at learning vocabulary (M=3.13) and they also were fairly satisfied with the amount of vocabulary they were able to use (M=2.83). These medium scores could be related to item 14, whereby they claimed not to feel too anxious or nervous when trying to express themselves in English (M=3.26). Lastly, learners reported being constant at learning vocabulary since they did not give up despite difficulties (M=2.27). However, they seemed to be more prone to abandoning if the materials used were boring (M=2.75). What is more, they also confessed that their dedication to this learning process could not be rated as high, but medium, according to the average score awarded (M=3.15).

The third category of beliefs had to do with certain linguistic aspects of vocabulary learning. It was focused on intrinsic aspects of vocabulary within the general framework of learning a FL. For example, in accordance with the mean scores, students clearly agreed that the cultural background of a particular community shapes its vocabulary (M=3.85). They also acknowledged the

importance of vocabulary in learning a FL, since it was not rated as less important than other aspects, such as grammar (M=2.34); at the same time, however, they were less sure about whether English vocabulary was difficult to learn (M=2.81) or whether one could acquire a FL by focusing only on learning its vocabulary (M=2.67).

The fourth category required students to reflect upon the best way of learning vocabulary. They were given several statements about learning techniques so as to identify those that suited them best. Thus, they claimed that rather than studying new vocabulary, the best way to learn it was by putting it to use (M=4.57), the highest score obtained in the whole range of beliefs. Apart from this learning technique, students seemed to be aware of the importance of paying attention to collocations and set expressions that occurred with specific vocabulary items (M=3.96). They also acknowledged that the occurrence of the same word in different contexts surely implied its acquisition by the learner (M=3.84) and that trying to guess word meaning in a given context was one of the best ways to learn new words (M=3.50). Conversely, they showed medium scores towards the memorisation of individual words (M=2.61), self-learning (M=3.11) or reading (M=3.17) as good learning techniques. Moreover, they did not entirely rate positively the learning of vocabulary in context (M=2.86), supporting the idea of decontextualised word learning.

The fifth category presented statements concerning their ideas about how vocabulary should be taught. Roughly speaking, students reported the highest agreement on the items stating that the role of a FL teacher consisted in

promoting learners' autonomy by providing them with learning strategies (M=4.16), which undoubtedly should be taken into account in the next section of VLSs. Besides, they acknowledged that the least they should know about a word was its form, meaning and basic usage (M=4.02), which goes beyond knowing its L1 translation.

Apart from that, they clearly supported some statements: vocabulary should be taught in a clear and systematic way (M=3.87), out-of-context vocabulary teaching should be completed with in-context teaching (M=3.87), words should not be presented to students in isolation but in semantic groups or families (i.e. in thematic networks, word families..., M=3.72) and, finally, word structure should be taken into account for a better learning (M=3.58). However, they were not so sure whether teachers should create word lists for their students (M=3.30) or whether the teacher's role when teaching FL vocabulary consisted mainly in explaining the meaning of words in their context of occurrence (M=3.04), falling within the scope of medium scores.

As far as the vocabulary evaluation is concerned, learners defended the use of specific vocabulary tests to assess vocabulary knowledge (M=3.65). Apparently, in order to design this type of tests, they seemed to value the usefulness of word items for their personal interests (M=3.56), rather than their frequency of occurrence (M=3.06), ranging from high agreement to a moderate one.

4.1.1.2. VLSs: descriptive statistics

The last part of the SVLSQ focused on those strategies students actually had in mind when learning EFL vocabulary. As previously stated, this section was

adapted from Oxford's SILL (1990), Gu and Johnson's questionnaire (1996) and Schmitt's taxonomy (1997).

It included 61 statements about vocabulary learning strategies, divided into 5 main categories: strategies used to discover and understand the meaning of new words, strategies used for storing word items into memory, strategies to recall vocabulary items when needed, strategies that seek the use of already learnt vocabulary and, lastly, metacognitive strategies to regulate their own learning process. As in Part 2 of the questionnaire, learners were required to rate the use of each item on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always).

Figure 16 shows the mean scores obtained for the use of strategies made by the 712 subjects at the subscale level. Overall, on the five point scale, subjects rated metacognitive strategies the highest (Mean=3.44; SD=,739; SE=,279), followed by meaning discovery/understanding strategies (Mean=3.31; SD=,835; SE=,019), strategies for using already learnt vocabulary (Mean=2.90; SD=,835; SE=,031), strategies for retrieving vocabulary (Mean=2.85; SD=,926; SE=,035) and, in the lowest position, strategies for storing material in memory (Mean=2.69; SD=,562; SE=,021).

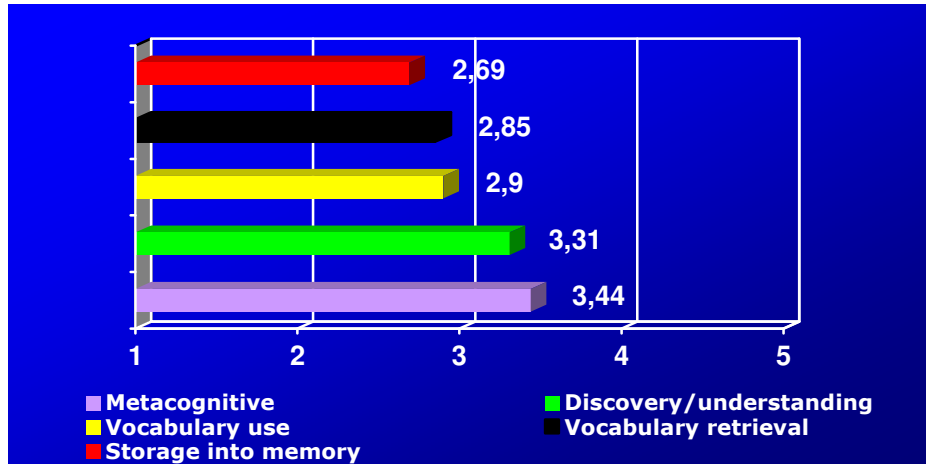


Figure 16: VLSs employed by Galician EFL learners

As previously stated, Oxford (1990: 291) defined mean scores of 3.5-5.0, on the 5-point scale, as high strategy use, that is, those generally used. Scores in the range 2.5-3.4 are regarded as “medium” strategy use, meaning those “sometimes used”, while those from 1.0-2.4 are labelled as “low” strategy use, i.e. strategies “that are not generally used”. Bearing in mind these broad categories of “high”, “medium” and “low”, the mean scores obtained in this survey could be roughly described as medium. The rating of memory strategies as the lowest in this study supports similar findings of other studies (Bedell and Oxford, 1996; Wharton, 2000).

Going into a more detailed analysis, it can be argued that within each category of VLSs there were relevant differences among average scores depending on particular strategy types, as the following table illustrates:

Table 24: VLSs usage according to categories

CATEGORY	STRATEGY TYPE	N	X	SD	SE
Metacognitive	Knowing how to learn	704	3,46	,764	,029
	Finding opportunities to learn	704	3,40	1,024	,038
Meaning discovery/ understanding	Guessing	710	3,50	,796	,030
	Analysing/reasoning	709	3,20	,802	,030
	Dictionary	709	3,53	,663	,025
	Asking for help	710	2,91	,675	,025
Vocabulary use		704	2,90	,835	,031
Vocabulary retrieval		705	2,85	,926	,035
Storage into memory	Rehearsal	709	2,81	1,09	,041
	Creating mental linkages	708	2,93	,722	,027
	Applying images and sounds	706	2,34	,772	,029
	Revision	702	2,44	1,016	,038
	Employing action	702	1,71	,900	,034
	Taking notes	704	3,18	,908	,034

Whereas the five general categories of strategies were rated as “medium” use strategies, depending on the type of strategy within each general category, scores may range from techniques rated as low use, for example, storage into memory strategies that employ action (M=1.71) to high frequently employed ones, as in the case of those related to using all means available to understand word meaning (M=3.83). They will be accounted for in close detail ordered from the highest to the lowest frequency of use.

◆ **Metacognitive:** As explained before, these strategies are connected with students’ own regulation and monitoring of their vocabulary learning, Table 25 shows the results which were surprisingly positive.

Table 25: VLSs usage – Metacognitive category

STRATEGY TYPE	ITEM STATEMENT	N	X	SD
Knowing how to learn	I know whether a word is essential for me to understand a text.	702	3,55	1,059
	I know whether a word is essential for me to learn.	698	3,55	1,021
	I know how to use clues to understand meaning.	702	3,29	1,087
	I always reserve time for vocabulary.	703	3,46	1,166
Finding opportunities to learn	I read other materials in English that are of my interest.	701	2,97	1,455
	I only learn vocabulary taught by the teacher.	704	2,57	1,382
	I only pay attention to vocabulary related to exams.	704	2,40	1,345
	I use all means available to understand words.	699	3,83	1,134

Within the group of “knowing how to learn”, students were in general quite sure whether a word was essential to understand a paragraph or important to learn (both means= 3.55). However, their scores descended to the medium range when asked about whether they reserved time to learn vocabulary (M=3.46) or whether they knew which cues were useful to understand meaning (M=3.29). Furthermore, regarding strategies that “seek opportunities to learn”, students reported using very frequently all means they could to understand a word (M=3.83) and reading other materials apart from the class ones to a more moderate extent (M=2.97). This category of strategies contains two items that are worth explaining. The two of them asked students whether they focused only on the vocabulary items covered in class or required to pass their exams or, on the contrary, they learnt words outside the classroom.³⁰ Curiously enough, they argued they did not pay attention exclusively to vocabulary related to exams

³⁰ In fact, they were excluded from the analysis because the 1 to 5 scale should be interpreted in a variation of degree from less to more frequency. However, since the wording of these two items was based on negative statements, they could lead to misunderstanding. That is why I finally disregarded these two items.

(2.40), and only sometimes did they restrict to those items taught by the teacher (M=2.57).

◆ **Meaning discovery / understanding:** Roughly speaking, within the category of techniques employed to discover and understand the meaning of new words, the overall mean scores of the twenty strategy statements were more positive than those stated for the remaining categories.

Indeed, students reported an extensive use of guessing strategies (M=3.50), as well as dictionary strategies (M=3.53) and a medium use of strategies that entail word analysis or reasoning to understand meaning (M=3.20) and social strategies; in the case of the latter, asking for help (M=2.90). Table 26 shows a detailed account of the vocabulary strategies under discussion.

Table 26: VLSs usage – Meaning discovery/understanding category

STRATEGY TYPE	ITEM STATEMENT	N	X	SD
Guessing	Guessing meaning from context and topic.	709	4,09	,992
	Guessing meaning from examples in context.	705	3,73	1,053
	Guessing meaning from logical development of paragraph.	705	3,44	1,129
	Looking for definitions/paraphrases to check hypothesis.	707	3,60	1,109
	Checking hypothesis in context.	704	3,56	1,236
	Guessing meaning by dividing word into chunks.	707	2,60	1,421
Analysing / reasoning	Applying general rules to understand meaning.	705	2,94	1,242
	Using common sense and background knowledge to understand meaning.	706	3,90	,969
	Analysing word parts by comparison with mother tongue to understand meaning.	705	2,55	1,274
	Word translation into mother tongue.	704	3,42	1,210
Dictionary	Whenever I see an unknown word.	707	3,80	1,099
	Whenever I want to confirm guesses about meaning.	707	3,94	1,092
	I look up only essential words.	706	3,32	1,287
	I read sample sentences illustrating all meaning aspects.	702	4,03	1,138
	I pay attention to many aspects, not only meaning.	706	3,50	1,289
	I use monolingual dictionaries.	703	2,61	1,490
Asking for help	I ask teacher for explanation or translation.	707	3,45	1,180
	I ask teacher for sentence where the word is embedded.	707	2,58	1,217
	I ask classmates for its meaning.	706	3,21	1,206
	I prefer group activities to discover word meaning.	631	2,36	1,134

Dictionary strategies seemed to be widely used either to understand the meaning of unfamiliar words (M=3.80) or to confirm hypotheses about their meaning (M=3.94). A variety of looking-up strategies were also reported, such as reading sample sentences that illustrate the meaning of the word in a dictionary (the highest score, actually: 4.03) or paying attention to other aspects, such as translation, pronunciation, derivatives..., rather than the simple meaning of the word (3.50). However, only sometimes do learners check whether a word is crucial or not to understand a paragraph before using the dictionary, or resort to monolingual dictionaries; as expected, this is especially so in the case of younger learners.

Learners resorted to guessing strategies very frequently, making use of context paragraph and topic (M=4.09) and looking for examples provided in the context (M=3.73) that help them discover the meaning of new words. They also claimed to look for words, definitions or paraphrases in the current paragraph (M=3.60) to check the hypothesis they had about the meaning of a word and even to test the presupposed meaning in the context to see if it fits in (3.56). The remaining two strategies, that is, trying to find out the logical development of the paragraph where the word is embedded and dividing the word into chunks (prefix, suffix...) to guess meaning were reported as medium use strategies, although the former was more popular than the latter (means=3.44 and 2.60 respectively).

Analysing/reasoning strategies were also used, though to a medium extent. Indeed, only one of them, i.e., employing the common sense and previous knowledge to understand the meaning of new words, was reported as frequently

applied (M=3.90). The remaining three techniques showed inferior scores, descending to the medium-use scope: word translation (M=3.42), applying general rules to derive hypotheses about word meaning (M=2.94), and analysing word elements (sounds, roots, prefixes...) by comparing them to their mother tongue to understand meaning (M=2.55).

Finally, social strategies obtained the lowest score within this category. Learners reported asking for a teacher’s translation of the new word, asking for a classmate’s translation or asking the teacher to embed the new word into a sentence to understand its meaning to a medium extent (means= 3.45; 3.31 and 2.58, respectively). Discovering the meaning of new words by means of group activities is rated with very low figures; it was, in fact, the lowest score in this group: 2.36.

◆ **Vocabulary use:** These strategies are connected with the exploitation of already learnt vocabulary. They all fell within the range of medium use, although scores were higher for resorting to the English media and new technologies (M=3.46) and using already learnt vocabulary as much as possible (M=3.11), as Table 27 below illustrates:

Table 27: VLSs usage – Vocabulary use category

STRATEGY TYPE	ITEM STATEMENT	N	X	SD
Vocabulary use	Resorting to media and technologies to use already learnt words.	703	3,46	1,267
	Making up sentences in English with learnt words.	700	2,52	1,250
	Using learnt material as much as possible.	699	3,11	1,184
	Making up new words to overcome communicative limitations.	702	2,53	1,287

Conversely, average means were lower with strategies that consisted in making up new sentences with known vocabulary or making up new words to overcome communicative limitations while engaged in using these already learnt words.

◆ **Vocabulary retrieval:** Table 28 indicates an overall medium use of the strategies employed to retrieve vocabulary from memory when necessary. This applies to remembering words in situational (Bank: open an account, cheque, cash...), semantic (synonyms, antonyms...) or collocational sets.

Table 28: VLSs usage – Vocabulary retrieval category

STRATEGY TYPE	ITEM STATEMENT	N	X	SD
Vocabulary retrieval	Retrieving vocabulary from memory in situational sets.	702	2,94	1,161
	Retrieving vocabulary from memory in semantic sets.	700	2,74	1,156
	Retrieving vocabulary from memory in collocational sets.	702	2,88	1,153

◆ **Storage into memory:** The students participating in this study stated that they were less likely to use strategies to store new vocabulary into memory. However, there are great differences of use among them, depending on the particular strategy under discussion, as illustrated in Table 29.

Table 29: VLSs usage – Storage into memory category

STRATEGY TYPE	ITEM STATEMENT	N	X	SD
Rehearsal	Repeating words aloud to memorise them.	707	2,98	1,336
	Writing words several times to memorise them.	707	2,64	1,349
Creating mental linkages	Word grouping.	706	3,15	1,263
	Grouping words around a topic.	703	3,03	1,276
	Grouping words around a situation.	705	3,01	1,277
	Remembering words with similar parts in spelling.	707	3,03	1,302
	Memorising prefixes and suffixes.	702	2,25	1,223
	Remembering collocations.	702	2,89	1,183
Applying images and sounds	Creating semantic networks with meaningful groups.	702	2,74	1,175
	Looking for synonyms/antonyms in memory.	704	3,14	1,189
	Creating sentences in own language to link new words to known ones.	704	2,58	1,212
	Remembering sentence in which word was embedded.	705	2,93	1,218
	Creating contexts to embed new words.	707	3,52	1,122
	Creating mental picture of words.	704	2,73	1,317
Revision	Spatial memorisation of words.	703	2,80	1,291
	Semantic mapping.	702	1,80	1,066
	Keyword method.	703	2,21	1,260
Employing action	Sound association between English words.	703	2,69	1,277
	Creating rhymes to remember words.	704	1,81	1,160
Note-taking	Making reviews of words from time to time.	704	2,85	1,158
	Self-testing on vocabulary.	700	2,02	1,209
Note-taking	Total Physical response method.	700	1,54	,948
	Acting out new words.	701	1,88	1,117
	Creating word lists.	703	3,33	1,318
Note-taking	Using flashcards.	703	2,15	1,360
	Taking class notes on unfamiliar vocabulary.	702	4,06	1,084

Note-taking strategies could be considered as a good example of this: The three statements contained here were scored from high frequently used (“taking notes in class of unfamiliar words”, M=4.06), medium use (“word lists”, M=3.33) to low frequently employed (“flash-cards”, M=2.15).

In this light, from all the strategies that entail creating mental linkages between words, only one of them obtained a high frequent use score, i.e., “inserting words in particular contexts to recall them better” (M=3.52). The remaining techniques fell within the scope of medium usage, except for one, that

is, “memorising common prefixes and suffixes”, which was scored as low frequent (M=2.25).

On the other hand, rehearsal techniques, namely oral and written repetition of words, mark the borderline between medium and low frequent strategies; they were quite homogeneous (means=2.98 and 2.64). Nevertheless, revision strategies showed lower scores between medium (“making vocabulary reviews from time to time”, M=2.85) and low (“Self-testing”, M=2.02). This is also the case of strategies involving images and sounds: students reported a medium use of mental pictures (M=2.73), spatial memorisation (M=2.80) or sound associations between English words (2.69), whereas they did not resort to the keyword method (M=2.21), semantic maps (M=1.80) or rhyme creation to remember new words (M=1.81). Finally, the lowest scores obtained in the whole range of vocabulary learning strategies correspond to techniques that ask for a physical response on the learners’ part. Thus, the Total Physical Response method or acting out new words to recall them better were reported as almost never used (means= 1.54 and 1.88, respectively).

4.1.1.3. Students’ responses to open questions

Both parts 2 and 3 of the SVLSQ had at the end an open question that provided respondents with the opportunity to include any further remark or idea about vocabulary learning or to add any other learning strategy not mentioned before. Just as in the case of the previous closed questions, the responses obtained from that section were also coded (when feasible) using SPSS software in accordance with the belief or strategy type.

These final questions were only answered by 134 students out of the whole sample of 712; this represents 18.8% of the total. As for the open question about beliefs, the responses focused mainly on how vocabulary should be taught. Thus 6 learners (4.5% out of these 134) complained about our current educational system with regard to FL teaching. Among other ideas, some of them claimed that English lessons were boring, textbooks should include more useful vocabulary, the use of monolingual dictionaries should be encouraged, teachers should pay equal attention to both good and bad learners and a closer relationship between teachers and students would improve education (1 mention each). Besides, 1.5% of the answers claimed that using vocabulary is better than studying it, 1.3% of the replies referred to the learners' dislike for English and 4.5% also emphasised the importance of research projects such as the current one. Furthermore, when asked about vocabulary learning strategies, they mentioned quite a few of them: some were already included in the questionnaire, others were not there or showed some variations, as Table 30 illustrates:

Table 30: VLSs mentioned by learners in the open question

CATEGORY	STRATEGY	N	%
Storage into memory	Written repetition.	8	5,7%
	Oral repetition.	7	5%
	Asking someone to repeat aloud words.	1	0,7%
	Singing words to remember them.	1	0,7%
	Remembering context where word is embedded.	1	0,7%
	Making up stories with words.	1	0,7%
	Remembering words by creating anagrams.	2	1,4%
	Word lists.	7	5%
	Creating rhymes and songs.	1	0,7%
	Associating words and sounds.	1	0,7%
	Recording words and listening to them later.	2	1,4%
	Using pictures or drawings to remember words.	6	4,3%
	Spatial memory.	2	1,4%
	Semantic map, sketches or tables.	4	2,9%
	Revision.	2	1,4%
	Acting out.	1	0,7%
	Flashcards.	2	1,4%
Taking notes.	6	4,3%	
Vocabulary use	Overcoming limitations when speaking.	1	0,7%
	Using new words in conversation.	17	12,1%
	Using vocabulary as much as possible (oral, written language).	5	3,6%
Metacognitive	Using English songs to learn vocabulary.	25	17,9%
	Using mass media and new technologies.	24	17,1%
	Reading as much as possible to learn vocabulary.	13	9,3%
Total		140	100,0%

They only mentioned three broad categories of vocabulary learning strategies, namely, storage into memory, metacognitive and strategies that entail using lexicon that had been previously studied. The highest scores corresponded to the metacognitive scope (44.3%), since learners claimed they had found new ways of building up their vocabulary command on their own by resorting to songs in English, films in original version with subtitles, mass media, new technologies, such as the Internet, etc. Moreover, they also reported to read as much as possible in English to enlarge their FL vocabulary.

In addition to that, and somehow in clear contrast with the data gathered from the closed items of the questionnaire, storage into memory strategies were also mentioned (39.1%). Here, the predominant response was related to rehearsal strategies, such as written and oral repetition (5.7% and 5% of the total number of strategies mentioned). Then, note-taking techniques also played an important role, since learners stated making word lists (5%) and taking notes (4.3%), using different colours to recall them better. Finally, strategies related to the use of visual cues to recall words (drawings, pictures...) were also relevant within the overall range of strategies (4.3%).

Finally, learners argued they tried to make use of the already learnt vocabulary to a fair extent (16.4%), especially when they claimed to speak English as much as they could to practise known words (12.1%).

4.1.1.4. Reported beliefs and VLS use in terms of variables

One of the aims of the present research was to establish whether learner background factors influenced both their ideas about vocabulary learning and their use of vocabulary learning strategies. Four factors will be presented in this section: gender, age, grade level and period of time devoted to the study of English. Similar tables to the ones above will be used to present the data. However, in the discussion of the role and effects of these factors, a new variable will be added to the previous elements of **N**, **X**, **SD** and **SE**, i.e. the **P** value, which stands for the significance level, which will be tackled later on.

4.1.1.4.1. Gender differences

This background variable has been taken into account in numerous studies (Green and Oxford, 1995; Gu and Johnson, 1996; Jiménez Catalán, 2003; Li, 2004, etc.). They all reported significant differences between male and female students. Indeed, females were argued to resort more frequently to learning strategies than their male counterparts.

In order to find out whether there were discrepancies between male and female subjects regarding their ideas about vocabulary and their use of learning strategies, the statistic programme one-way ANOVA was applied. It consists of an analysis of variance by comparing the mean scores at the 0.05 significance level ($P < 0.05$) obtained by each subject group in the items included in the questionnaire. This significance level is a statistical term that measures the probability that a difference between groups may have arisen by chance. For instance, a P value of 0.01 ($p = .01$) means that there is 1 possibility out of 100 that the obtained result is due to chance. Thus, the lower the P value, the better.

◆ **Beliefs about vocabulary learning:**

With regard to beliefs about vocabulary learning, significant differences were observed in particular items, since 18 out of 34 items were found as significantly different between groups. Here, only significantly divergent items will be discussed.

Indeed, the first series of statements devoted to motivational aspects of vocabulary learning represent the highest number of relevant differences (9 out of 11), as shown in Table 31:

Table 31: Differences in students' beliefs about vocabulary learning according to gender (Part 1)

ITEM	BELIEF STATEMENT	SOURCE	N	X	SD	SE	P
7	I Like learning vocabulary.	MALE	265	3,49	1,222	,075	,000
		FEMALE	446	4,01	,995	,047	
8	I like using vocabulary.	MALE	264	3,47	1,308	,080	,000
		FEMALE	444	3,82	1,155	,055	
9	It is useful to find a good job.	MALE	265	3,55	1,308	,080	,000
		FEMALE	443	3,91	1,133	,054	
10	It is useful to understand things.	MALE	265	3,20	1,317	,081	,006
		FEMALE	443	3,46	1,171	,056	
11	It is useful to communicate.	MALE	262	3,16	1,407	,087	,000
		FEMALE	442	3,84	1,165	,055	
12	I am good at learning vocabulary.	MALE	263	2,98	1,195	,074	,007
		FEMALE	444	3,22	1,031	,049	
15	I give up if it is too difficult.	MALE	262	2,48	1,265	,078	,000
		FEMALE	440	2,15	1,170	,056	
16	I give up if materials are boring.	MALE	265	2,90	1,371	,084	,023
		FEMALE	445	2,67	1,285	,061	
17	I make a great effort to learn.	MALE	264	2,99	1,140	,070	,001
		FEMALE	447	3,25	,943	,045	

Female students obtained higher scores than men, with the only exception of two statements, which asked about whether they gave up studying vocabulary if it was too difficult or tedious; these, however, cannot be regarded as contradictory since a low mean here could be considered as positive.

Generally speaking, women were more positive with regard to their like for English and vocabulary use. The former also found vocabulary useful to find a good job, to understand things they like (films, songs...) and to communicate with foreign people, whereas the latter were more sceptical. Besides, women reported a better self-image as FL vocabulary learners and confessed to placing more

emphasis on learning vocabulary and not to give up to the same extent as their male counterparts did.

No significant differences were observed for statements about a number of linguistic aspects. However, three items belonging to the group of strategies on how vocabulary is learnt showed some variance as presented in Table 32.

Table 32: Differences in students' beliefs about vocabulary learning according to gender (Part 2)

ITEM	BELIEF STATEMENT	SOURCE	N	X	SD	SE	P
23	Vocabulary is essentially learnt through reading.	MALE	263	3,06	1,098	,068	,034
		FEMALE	445	3,23	1,052	,050	
27	The only way of learning vocabulary is by memorising words.	MALE	263	2,86	1,297	,080	,000
		FEMALE	446	2,47	1,170	,055	
29	Vocabulary is learnt by use rather than memorising it.	MALE	265	3,55	1,308	,080	,000
		FEMALE	443	3,91	1,133	,054	
30	The least a learner should know about a word is its form, meaning and use.	MALE	262	3,80	1,149	,071	,000
		FEMALE	445	4,15	,897	,043	
34	Out-of-context teaching should be completed with in-context one.	MALE	258	3,72	1,013	,063	,001
		FEMALE	439	3,96	,888	,042	
35	Teachers should make word lists.	MALE	262	3,42	1,307	,081	,038
		FEMALE	441	3,22	1,228	,058	
36	Teachers' role: explaining meaning in context.	MALE	262	3,18	1,261	,078	,016
		FEMALE	442	2,95	1,207	,057	
37	Teachers' role: providing students with strategies.	MALE	261	3,95	1,029	,064	,000
		FEMALE	442	4,28	,832	,040	
39	Vocabulary tests should be based on lists of frequent words.	MALE	261	3,23	1,284	,079	,004
		FEMALE	444	2,95	1,201	,057	

Female learners agreed more on the importance of reading and putting words to use rather than on memorisation in the process of learning vocabulary. On the contrary, men seemed to have a less negative opinion about memorising individual words as a good way to enlarge one's lexicon.

The answers obtained for the fourth group of items, i.e. how vocabulary should be taught and assessed, were quite miscellaneous. Women reported here a higher awareness of those word aspects that should be known by learners:

form, meaning and basic use, not only its translation. They also acknowledged the importance of teaching words in context to a greater extent than men did. Conversely, they seemed to be less prone towards the use of word lists than their male counterparts.

As for the role of teachers, women were more in favour than men of teachers who provided students with learning strategies so as to develop their autonomy and were not so sure that their role was merely explaining word meaning in their context of occurrence.

Finally, when asked about vocabulary assessment, men and women scores were quite similar with only one exception; male learners supported the formulation of vocabulary tests based on frequent words to a greater extent than females.

◆ **Variation in overall strategy use**

Figure 17 and Table 33 present average mean scores outlining general differences between male and female participants in the five main subscales of vocabulary learning strategies.

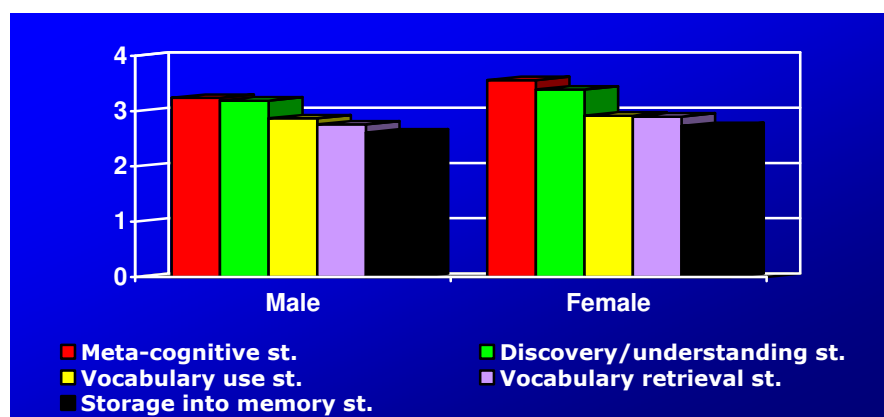


Figure 17: Differences in VLS use according to gender

Table 33: Differences in the use of VLS categories according to gender

CATEGORY	SOURCE	N	X	SD	SE	P
Discovery strategies	MALE	265	3,17	,529	,032	,000
	FEMALE	446	3,39	,479	,023	
Storage into memory	MALE	264	2,61	,590	,036	,007
	FEMALE	446	2,73	,541	,026	
Vocabulary retrieval	MALE	260	2,76	,918	,057	,036
	FEMALE	444	2,91	,927	,044	
Vocabulary use	MALE	261	2,87	,911	,056	,410
	FEMALE	444	2,92	,787	,037	
Metacognitive	MALE	261	3,24	,734	,045	,000
	FEMALE	443	3,56	,718	,034	

Female students reported more overall use of strategies from all categories and even though they all fell within the scope of medium usage (except for metacognitive strategies, which were said to be highly used by women [M=3.56]), significant variation was found in three of the five strategy subscales, corresponding to the means obtained in discovery, storage into memory and metacognitive strategies. Nevertheless, what is particularly interesting are the means obtained for individual items, where significant differences between groups were identified.

Within the category of vocabulary strategies employed to discover or understand the meaning of new words, women outscored men in the whole range of strategies (20 items), but this was significantly relevant in those cases as illustrated in Table 34:

Table 34: Differences in learners' exploitation of meaning discovery/understanding strategies according to gender

ITEM	DISCOVERY STRATEGIES	SOURCE	N	X	SD	SE	P
41	I guess meaning from context/topic.	MALE	264	3,89	1,141	,070	,000
		FEMALE	445	4,21	,870	,041	
42	I look for examples in context to guess meaning.	MALE	264	3,56	1,152	,071	,001
		FEMALE	441	3,83	,976	,046	
44	I look for definitions, paraphrases to support my guesses.	MALE	263	3,38	1,181	,073	,000
		FEMALE	444	3,73	1,042	,049	
45	I check my hypothesis in context.	MALE	263	3,34	1,288	,079	,000
		FEMALE	441	3,69	1,186	,056	
46	I try to find out meaning by dividing word into chunks.	MALE	263	2,37	1,349	,083	,001
		FEMALE	444	2,74	1,445	,069	
47	I derive hypothesis by applying general rules.	MALE	261	2,78	1,214	,075	,007
		FEMALE	444	3,04	1,250	,059	
48	I use common sense and previous knowledge to understand meaning.	MALE	262	3,79	1,010	,062	,013
		FEMALE	444	3,97	,938	,045	
51	Whenever I see unfamiliar words, I use a dictionary.	MALE	264	3,65	1,157	,071	,005
		FEMALE	443	3,88	1,054	,050	
52	I look up words in a dictionary to confirm the guessed meaning.	MALE	263	3,65	1,191	,073	,000
		FEMALE	444	4,11	,991	,047	
54	I read sample sentences illustrating the different senses of a word.	MALE	262	3,74	1,248	,077	,000
		FEMALE	440	4,20	1,032	,049	
55	I pay attention to many word aspects, not only meaning.	MALE	263	3,33	1,291	,080	,007
		FEMALE	443	3,60	1,278	,061	
56	I make use of monolingual dictionaries.	MALE	262	2,41	1,505	,093	,007
		FEMALE	441	2,73	1,470	,070	

Female learners did more guessing, looking for examples within a particular context both to guess the meaning of words and to check their own hypothesis than men. Indeed, for items 44 and 45 (checking hypotheses) men reported them as medium use strategies (mean=3.38 and 3.34) whereas women used them frequently (mean=3.73 and 3.69).

Strategies that involve analysing and reasoning procedures to understand word meaning were also more frequently used by female learners. Just as in the previous case, item 46 (word division into parts) was reported as low use by men

(M=2.37), whilst women's average mean fell within the scope of medium use. Finally, it could be argued that dictionaries are more frequently and more skilfully used by women, in accordance with the mean scores depicted in table 35 below, since they paid attention to many aspects other than word meaning very frequently (in contrast with medium scope scored by men) and they also resorted to monolingual dictionaries more commonly than men (mean= 2.73, moderate use against M=2.41, within low use range).

As for the second category of strategies, i.e. storage into memory, the picture found is really curious. In spite of the fact that both groups reported a moderate use of this type of strategies, females outscored males in repetition, both oral and written. In fact, men's mean for written repetition was low (M=2.43) as contrasted with female medium one (M=2.77), (see Table 35).

Besides, women were more prone to grouping words in order to recall them better, either related to a topic, to an everyday situation, creating a semantic network or embedding them into a particular context (phrases, sentences...).

As can be seen, items 75, 80, 84 and 86, i.e. remembering a word by its spatial location, reviewing learnt vocabulary from time to time, making lists and taking down notes about new words, were strategies more frequently employed by women than by men. In fact, the former reported making lists of words with high frequency (M=3.53) whereas the latter only made them from time to time.

Curiously enough, there is only one subgroup of storage into memory strategies where male means were slightly higher than females but still significant on the ".05" value: strategies involving action. Men reported a more frequent use

(within the scope of low frequency) of the Total Physical Response method and acting out words to recall them better.

Table 35: Differences in learners' exploitation of storage into memory strategies according to gender

ITEM	STORAGE INTO MEMORY STRATEGIES	SOURCE	N	X	SD	SE	P
61	I repeat words aloud to memorise them.	MALE	263	2,81	1,349	,083	,007
		FEMALE	444	3,09	1,318	,063	
62	I write down words to memorise them.	MALE	264	2,43	1,341	,083	,001
		FEMALE	443	2,77	1,339	,064	
63	I group words together to remember them.	MALE	262	2,98	1,270	,078	,008
		FEMALE	444	3,24	1,250	,059	
64	I group words related to the same topic to remember them.	MALE	260	2,84	1,286	,080	,003
		FEMALE	443	3,14	1,258	,060	
65	I group words related to the same situation to remember them.	MALE	262	2,81	1,295	,080	,002
		FEMALE	443	3,13	1,254	,060	
69	I create semantic networks and meaningful groups of words.	MALE	262	2,60	1,182	,073	,015
		FEMALE	440	2,82	1,163	,055	
73	I learn words better by putting them into contexts.	MALE	261	2,67	1,280	,079	,013
		FEMALE	443	2,52	1,168	,055	
75	I remember words by spatial memorisation.	MALE	261	2,66	1,278	,079	,022
		FEMALE	442	2,89	1,293	,062	
80	I review words from time to time.	MALE	262	2,67	1,222	,075	,002
		FEMALE	442	2,95	1,107	,053	
82	Total Physical Response.	MALE	258	1,66	1,048	,065	,012
		FEMALE	442	1,47	,878	,042	
83	I physically act out the meaning of new words.	MALE	259	2,03	1,151	,072	,008
		FEMALE	442	1,80	1,089	,052	
84	I make vocabulary lists.	MALE	701	1,88	1,117	,042	,000
		FEMALE	259	2,99	1,300	,081	
86	I take notes on words.	MALE	260	3,70	1,212	,075	,000
		FEMALE	442	4,28	,941	,045	

As for the remaining groups of vocabulary learning techniques, no significant discrepancies were found in retrieving stored vocabulary from memory. However, when dealing with strategies to make use of already learnt vocabulary, female learners' average means were again higher than male ones, as shown in Table 36:

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Table 36: Differences in learners' exploitation of vocabulary use strategies according to gender

ITEM	VOCAB. USE STRATEGIES	SOURCE	N	X	SD	SE	P
90	I read and employ English media to use learnt words.	MALE	259	3,25	1,298	,081	,001
		FEMALE	444	3,58	1,234	,059	
92	I use known vocabulary in speech and writing.	MALE	258	2,98	1,200	,075	,023
		FEMALE	441	3,19	1,169	,056	
93	I overcome communicative limitations by making up new words.	MALE	259	2,66	1,318	,082	,040
		FEMALE	443	2,45	1,263	,060	

They tried to use already learnt vocabulary, both orally and writing. Besides, they read and tried to use learnt words with English language media very frequently (M=3.58) whilst men did it more moderately (M=3.25). Conversely, male learners made up new words to overcome linguistic limitations slightly more frequently than females (M=2.66 vs. M=2.45, respectively).

Lastly, female participants spent more time on planning and learning English vocabulary. Indeed, they reported they generally knew which words were essential to understand a text (M=3.64), whereas their male counterparts were not so sure about it (M=3.40).

Table 37: Differences in learners' exploitation of metacognitive strategies according to gender

ITEM	METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES	SOURCE	N	X	SD	SE	P
94	I know whether a word is essential to understand a text or not.	MALE	260	3,40	1,088	,067	,004
		FEMALE	442	3,64	1,032	,049	
97	I reserve time to study vocabulary.	MALE	260	3,15	1,184	,073	,000
		FEMALE	443	3,65	1,117	,053	
98	I look for other materials to read apart from textbooks.	MALE	260	2,68	1,444	,090	,000
		FEMALE	441	3,13	1,437	,068	
99	I only learn vocabulary taught by the teacher.	MALE	261	2,80	1,428	,088	,001
		FEMALE	443	2,43	1,338	,064	
100	I only focus on vocabulary related to exams.	MALE	261	2,73	1,400	,087	,000
		FEMALE	443	2,20	1,274	,061	
101	I use all means available to make words clear.	MALE	259	3,54	1,198	,074	,000
		FEMALE	440	4,00	1,059	,050	

They admitted reserving time to study vocabulary very frequently (M=3.65) whilst men reported being less constant (M=3.15). Females read other materials apart from textbooks and used all means available to understand words to a higher extent than men; the latter, however, confessed they restricted themselves to the vocabulary taught by the teacher or directly related to examinations more frequently than their female counterparts.

In the light of the results exposed, it could be argued that gender was found to be a relevant variable when determining both beliefs and vocabulary learning strategies among the sample subjects. Females reported significantly more use of almost all of the learning strategies included in the questionnaire; this finding is in keeping with results obtained in previous studies (Green and Oxford, 1995; Gu and Johnson, 1996; Li, 2004).

In fact, they outscored men in the five categories of vocabulary learning strategies, namely, discovery, storage into memory, vocabulary retrieval, vocabulary use and, finally, metacognitive techniques. The latter were especially relevant since the differences between both groups (men versus women) were notable. Thus, it could be argued that female learners get involved in the process of vocabulary learning to a greater extent than males. This will be analysed in close detail in the following chapters.

4.1.1.4.2. Age differences

The second background variable considered in this investigation was the age of the participants. Just to mention some of the studies taking this variable into account, Lan and Oxford (2003) conducted research on the learning strategies of

elementary school children and demonstrated that one of the factors that influenced learners' use of different learning strategies was that of age. Moreover, in a study carried out in Japan, Schmitt (1997) demonstrated that vocabulary strategies change as learners grow older. Later on, Peacock and Ho (2003) found differences between learners depending on age groups: affective and social strategies were more frequently employed by older students.

Thus, I decided to include this factor in this analysis, which also proved to be significant. Students were subcategorised into six age groups, in range periods of three years each, so as to somehow make coincide the variables of age and grade (ESO, Bacharelato, University and so on).

◆ **Beliefs about vocabulary learning:**

Age was found to be one of the reasons that explained different beliefs about vocabulary strategies across subjects. In fact, 23 out of 34 items presented significant discrepancies among different groups of participants.

As illustrated in Table 38, when dealing with motivational aspects, older learners (especially those from 21 onwards) expressed their appreciation for learning and using vocabulary. They also acknowledged the value of knowing words both to understand texts in English and to communicate with foreign people. On the other hand, younger learners seemed to share these views to a lesser extent. However, they all agreed on the fact that vocabulary would be useful to find a good job (all means were over 3.5), except for those over 26 years old, who strangely enough were not so optimistic ($M=3.13$).

Table 38: Differences in students' beliefs about vocabulary according to age (Part 1)

ITEM	BELIEF STATEMENT	SOURCE	N	X	SD	SE	P
7	I Like learning vocabulary.	12 - 14	90	3,44	1,133	,119	,000
		15 - 17	240	3,43	1,165	,075	
		18 - 20	74	3,73	1,162	,135	
		21 - 23	123	4,24	,840	,076	
		24 - 26	49	4,33	,774	,111	
		+26	121	4,29	,880	,080	
8	I like using vocabulary.	12 - 14	90	3,19	1,271	,134	,000
		15 - 17	239	3,42	1,274	,082	
		18 - 20	74	3,61	1,353	,157	
		21 - 23	123	4,16	,935	,084	
		24 - 26	49	4,18	,808	,115	
		+26	120	3,93	1,113	,102	
9	It is useful to find a good job.	12 - 14	90	3,96	1,198	,126	,000
		15 - 17	238	3,84	1,236	,080	
		18 - 20	74	3,91	1,009	,117	
		21 - 23	123	4,19	,944	,085	
		24 - 26	49	3,73	1,132	,162	
		+26	120	3,13	1,287	,117	
10	It is useful to understand things.	12 - 14	89	2,96	1,429	,152	,000
		15 - 17	241	3,15	1,255	,081	
		18 - 20	74	3,36	1,309	,152	
		21 - 23	123	3,56	1,088	,098	
		24 - 26	49	3,65	1,071	,153	
		+26	118	3,72	1,003	,092	
11	It is useful to communicate.	12 - 14	90	3,36	1,335	,141	,000
		15 - 17	239	3,28	1,421	,092	
		18 - 20	71	3,32	1,392	,165	
		21 - 23	123	3,94	1,126	,102	
		24 - 26	49	3,98	,924	,132	
		+26	118	3,96	1,041	,096	
12	I am good at learning vocabulary.	12 - 14	90	3,00	1,245	,131	,002
		15 - 17	241	2,95	1,152	,074	
		18 - 20	72	3,18	1,079	,127	
		21 - 23	122	3,34	,984	,089	
		24 - 26	49	3,51	,916	,131	
		+26	119	3,18	,954	,087	
16	I give up if materials are boring.	12 - 14	90	2,49	1,432	,151	,005
		15 - 17	239	2,75	1,352	,087	
		18 - 20	74	3,14	1,307	,152	
		21 - 23	123	2,99	1,258	,113	
		24 - 26	49	2,59	1,257	,180	
		+26	121	2,58	1,223	,111	
17	I make a great effort to learn vocabulary.	12 - 14	89	3,55	1,128	,120	,000
		15 - 17	241	2,97	1,060	,068	
		18 - 20	74	2,99	1,092	,127	
		21 - 23	123	3,24	,950	,086	
		24 - 26	49	3,20	,912	,130	
		+26	121	3,21	,887	,081	

All groups perceived themselves as moderate good at learning vocabulary, except for subjects aged from 24-26, who claimed to be good learners without reserve. Moreover, everyone reported to give up studying at times if the materials were boring; this, however, did not apply to 12-14 year-old students, who claimed they very rarely did so. This is in accordance with the last motivational item: all

groups rated the effort made to learn vocabulary as medium, although this was not the case for younger learners (12-14), who confessed to working on vocabulary more than the rest of the students (M=3.55).

As regards a number of linguistic aspects related to the learning of vocabulary, younger students' opinions were overall less definite than older ones. All groups stated that the background culture of a particular community is inevitably reflected in its vocabulary (all means are over 3.5), though not in the case of 12-14 aged learners, whose mean was not so high (M=3.35). The same tendency can be seen in item 19, where students from 21 onwards made it clear that learning a FL is not essentially learning its vocabulary; this contrasts with younger learners' opinions, who were more dubious about it. Finally, all groups considered English vocabulary as moderately difficult to learn, except for those between 24 and 26, for whom vocabulary seemed not difficult to learn (M=2.37).

Table 39: Differences in students' beliefs about vocabulary according to age (Part 2)

ITEM	BELIEF STATEMENT	SOURCE	N	X	SD	SE	P
18	The culture of a community is reflected in its vocabulary.	12 - 14	81	3,35	1,206	,134	,000
		15 - 17	241	3,77	1,081	,070	
		18 - 20	72	3,83	1,048	,124	
		21 - 23	123	4,23	,922	,083	
		24 - 26	49	3,98	,878	,125	
		+26	121	3,89	1,117	,102	
19	Learning a FL is essentially learning its vocabulary.	12 - 14	90	3,39	1,313	,138	,000
		15 - 17	237	2,89	1,194	,078	
		18 - 20	74	2,72	1,129	,131	
		21 - 23	123	2,23	1,039	,094	
		24 - 26	48	2,29	1,051	,152	
		+26	121	2,25	1,067	,097	
21	English vocabulary is difficult to learn.	12 - 14	90	3,20	1,283	,135	,000
		15 - 17	241	2,98	1,072	,069	
		18 - 20	74	2,62	1,131	,131	
		21 - 23	123	2,52	,986	,089	
		24 - 26	49	2,37	,929	,133	
		+26	121	2,83	1,078	,098	

In accordance with the figures illustrated in Table 40, students did not show strong convictions when determining how vocabulary is learnt (average means

within the moderate scope), either by self-learning, contextualised learning or through reading; self-learning, however, seemed to be slightly less valued by older learners.

Table 40: Differences in students' beliefs about vocabulary according to age (Part 3)

ITEM	BELIEF STATEMENT	SOURCE	N	X	SD	SE	P
22	Self-learning is the best way to learn vocabulary.	12 - 14	87	3,31	1,279	,137	,000
		15 - 17	239	3,18	1,111	,072	
		18 - 20	73	3,14	1,058	,124	
		21 - 23	123	3,25	1,005	,091	
		24 - 26	49	2,84	1,087	,155	
		+26	119	2,74	1,061	,097	
23	Vocabulary is essentially learnt through reading.	12 - 14	90	2,90	1,264	,133	,003
		15 - 17	240	3,13	1,096	,071	
		18 - 20	74	3,09	1,036	,120	
		21 - 23	123	3,47	,899	,081	
		24 - 26	48	3,00	1,031	,149	
		+26	119	3,24	1,006	,092	
24	Vocabulary can only be learnt in context.	12 - 14	87	2,59	1,253	,134	,002
		15 - 17	236	2,77	1,185	,077	
		18 - 20	74	2,66	1,231	,143	
		21 - 23	123	3,11	1,249	,113	
		24 - 26	48	2,69	1,055	,152	
		+26	119	3,11	1,294	,119	
27	One can only learn vocabulary by memorising individual words.	12 - 14	90	3,51	1,376	,145	,000
		15 - 17	240	2,78	1,202	,078	
		18 - 20	74	2,55	1,160	,135	
		21 - 23	123	2,05	,965	,087	
		24 - 26	49	2,14	1,000	,143	
		+26	119	2,42	1,124	,103	
29	Using vocabulary is more important than memorising words.	12 - 14	90	4,33	,924	,097	,003
		15 - 17	240	4,55	,816	,053	
		18 - 20	74	4,47	,910	,106	
		21 - 23	123	4,76	,501	,045	
		24 - 26	49	4,65	,597	,085	
		+26	120	4,58	,693	,063	

Indeed, they apparently preferred reading and in-context learning to a higher extent. Moreover, all groups were convinced that using FL vocabulary was more important than memorising it, with higher scores corresponding to older learners. However, when asked about rote memorisation of words, the greatest divergence among groups arose: the younger the students, the more they believed in memorisation. Indeed, the group of 12-14 was highly in favour of memorising words, whereas 15 to 20 year-old students' scores fell to a moderate agreement and, finally, students from 21 onwards clearly were against rote memorisation.

With regard to how vocabulary should be taught and assessed, the majority of the participants showed clear ideas on the topic, such as the importance of knowing the word form, meaning and basic use beyond its mere translation; they also claimed that vocabulary required clear and systematic teaching. It is also curious to see how for the first item average means increase in the case of older students, whereas for the second, means follow the inverse order. Furthermore, most groups acknowledged the importance of the formal structure of words in the study of vocabulary, with the only exception of 18-20 and 24-26 year-old learners, who were not so sure about it.

Table 41: Differences in students' beliefs about vocabulary according to age (Part 4)

ITEM	BELIEF STATEMENT	SOURCE	N	X	SD	SE	P
30	The least a learner should know about a word is its form, meaning and basic use, not only its translation.	12 - 14	89	3,78	1,126	,119	,000
		15 - 17	238	3,92	1,062	,069	
		18 - 20	74	3,80	1,060	,123	
		21 - 23	123	4,46	,760	,069	
		24 - 26	49	4,16	,898	,128	
		+26	120	4,10	,920	,084	
31	Vocabulary must be taught in a systematic and clear way.	12 - 14	89	4,39	,900	,095	,000
		15 - 17	239	3,90	1,080	,070	
		18 - 20	73	3,64	1,046	,122	
		21 - 23	123	3,85	,997	,090	
		24 - 26	49	3,61	,909	,130	
		+26	118	3,68	,960	,088	
33	It is important to pay attention to word structure.	12 - 14	90	3,98	1,027	,108	,000
		15 - 17	236	3,56	,968	,063	
		18 - 20	74	3,30	1,017	,118	
		21 - 23	122	3,62	,856	,077	
		24 - 26	49	3,43	,935	,134	
		+26	116	3,51	1,009	,094	
34	Out-of-context teaching should be completed with in-context one.	12 - 14	85	3,33	1,117	,121	,000
		15 - 17	236	3,83	,961	,063	
		18 - 20	74	3,73	,941	,109	
		21 - 23	120	4,14	,770	,070	
		24 - 26	49	4,08	,759	,108	
		+26	119	4,13	,765	,070	
35	Teachers should make word lists.	12 - 14	90	3,87	1,201	,127	,000
		15 - 17	238	3,39	1,367	,089	
		18 - 20	73	3,19	1,076	,126	
		21 - 23	122	3,11	1,187	,107	
		24 - 26	48	3,46	1,091	,157	
		+26	119	2,93	1,148	,105	
36	Teachers' role: explaining meaning in context.	12 - 14	88	3,35	1,241	,132	,002
		15 - 17	238	3,14	1,255	,081	
		18 - 20	73	2,73	1,182	,138	
		21 - 23	122	3,07	1,190	,108	
		24 - 26	49	2,59	1,117	,160	
		+26	120	2,94	1,232	,112	
39	Vocabulary tests must be based on lists of the most frequently used words.	12 - 14	88	3,60	1,264	,135	,000
		15 - 17	239	3,33	1,275	,082	
		18 - 20	73	2,88	1,190	,139	
		21 - 23	123	2,63	1,042	,094	
		24 - 26	49	2,80	1,040	,149	
		+26	119	2,75	1,202	,110	

The last three items showed discrepancies between the first age group (12-14) and the rest of them. Item 34 stated that out-of-context vocabulary teaching should be completed with in-context one, a fact widely accepted by all groups except for the first one, whose mean was not so high (M=3.33). Conversely, younger learners considered a good idea that the teachers made lists of words for students (M=3.87), whereas older learners maintained a less positive position. Finally, all groups did not agree on the role of the teacher. They did not support the idea that the teachers' role was mainly explaining vocabulary in its context of occurrence; younger participants, however, apparently supported this assertion a little more than their older counterpart did.

As regards vocabulary assessment, the only source of discrepancy was identified in item 39, where once again younger learners (12-14) claimed that vocabulary tests should be based on lists of those words most frequently used (3.60) to a higher extent than older ones (all groups scored under 3.33).

◆ **Variation in overall strategy use**

Significant differences were found between the age groups on their use of vocabulary learning strategies with regard to the five subscales of strategies.

Figure 18 and Table 42 show the corresponding figures:

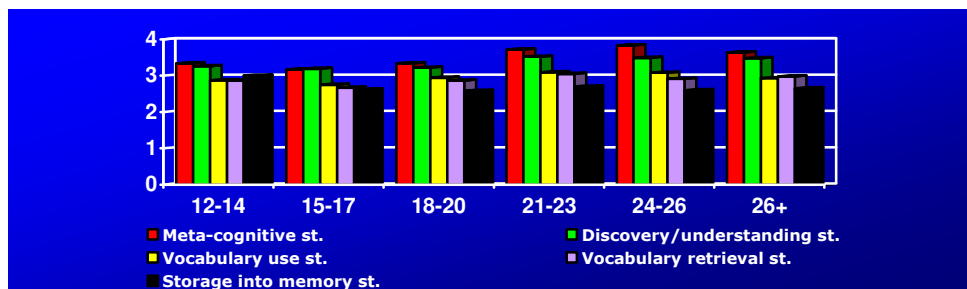


Figure 18: Differences in VLS use according to age

Overall, memory strategies were very little used according to the students' replies obtained; the greatest use of those strategies was reported by subjects in the 12-14 age group (mean= 3.00). Then, retrieval strategies received a moderate support by all groups, reporting older learners a slightly higher use than younger ones. The same tendency was observed when analysing the techniques that involve the use of learnt words, that is to say, even though all groups fell within the scope of medium use, older learners' average means were slightly higher than those of their younger counterparts.

Table 42: Differences in the use of VLS categories according to age

CATEGORY	SOURCE	N	X	SD	SE	P
Discovery strategies	12 - 14	90	3,26	0,601	0,063	,000
	15 - 17	240	3,18	0,494	0,032	
	18 - 20	74	3,21	0,523	0,061	
	21 - 23	123	3,48	0,429	0,039	
	24 - 26	49	3,44	0,501	0,072	
	+26	121	3,46	0,443	0,04	
Storage into memory	12 - 14	89	3,01	0,607	0,064	,000
	15 - 17	240	2,63	0,574	0,037	
	18 - 20	74	2,58	0,577	0,067	
	21 - 23	123	2,71	0,492	0,044	
	24 - 26	49	2,64	0,433	0,062	
	+26	121	2,65	0,552	0,05	
Vocabulary retrieval	12 - 14	88	2,86	0,826	0,088	,004
	15 - 17	237	2,67	0,933	0,061	
	18 - 20	73	2,86	0,943	0,11	
	21 - 23	123	3,05	0,979	0,088	
	24 - 26	49	2,9	0,92	0,131	
	+26	121	2,98	0,887	0,081	
Vocabulary use	12 - 14	88	2,87	0,857	0,091	,003
	15 - 17	237	2,74	0,891	0,058	
	18 - 20	74	2,94	0,956	0,111	
	21 - 23	123	3,09	0,704	0,063	
	24 - 26	49	3,07	0,758	0,108	
	+26	121	2,93	0,721	0,066	
Metacognitive	12 - 14	88	3,34	0,637	0,068	,000
	15 - 17	237	3,17	0,773	0,05	
	18 - 20	74	3,34	0,758	0,088	
	21 - 23	123	3,72	0,683	0,062	
	24 - 26	49	3,83	0,63	0,09	
	+26	121	3,64	0,603	0,055	

Undoubtedly, discovery strategies, the second highest in overall reported use, and metacognitive strategies, the highest overall are the most relevant cases. On the one hand, metacognitive strategies were reportedly most preferred by

subjects aged from 21 onwards, whilst students under this age showed a moderate use of these strategies.

On the other hand, discovery strategies were reportedly used to a medium extent. However, in spite of this uniformity within the scope of moderate use, it is worth pointing out that the remaining older learners' scores were slightly higher, very close to the borderline of 3.5 (means= 3.48, 3.44 and 3.46, respectively).

The age factor produced a considerable amount of significant differences when considering specific vocabulary learning strategies items. Within the category of strategies to discover and understand word meaning, guessing strategies, in the light of the average means depicted in Table 43, seemed to be more frequently used by older learners.

In fact, the lowest scores corresponded to learners aged from 12 to 14. Nevertheless, when asked about analysing or reasoning techniques, only item 49, *i.e. I make use of my common sense and previous knowledge when trying to understand the meaning of new words*, was frequently used by all groups, obtaining the highest means in the case of older students. The remaining strategies, such as applying general rules to derive meaning or analysing word parts by comparing them to native language, were reported as moderately or even infrequently used, being again the youngest less prone to using them. Only when asked about translating words into their mother tongue were the youngest participants (12-14) highly reliant on that strategy, in contrast with the medium use of the remaining age groups.

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Table 43: Differences in learners' exploitation of meaning discovery/ understanding strategies according to age (Part 1)

ITEM	DISCOVERY STRATEGIES	SOURCE	N	X	SD	SE	P
41	I guess meaning from context/topic.	12 - 14	89	3,51	1,253	,133	,000
		15 - 17	240	4,05	,997	,064	
		18 - 20	74	4,00	1,085	,126	
		21 - 23	123	4,34	,756	,068	
		24 - 26	48	4,23	,928	,134	
		+26	121	4,33	,757	,069	
42	I look for examples in context to guess meaning.	12 - 14	89	3,43	1,167	,124	,000
		15 - 17	239	3,62	1,108	,072	
		18 - 20	74	3,58	1,073	,125	
		21 - 23	123	4,04	,881	,079	
		24 - 26	47	3,91	,880	,128	
		+26	119	3,90	,942	,086	
43	I find out the logical development of the paragraph to guess word meaning.	12 - 14	89	3,17	1,189	,126	,000
		15 - 17	239	3,18	1,181	,076	
		18 - 20	74	3,39	1,044	,121	
		21 - 23	122	3,71	1,008	,091	
		24 - 26	47	3,91	,830	,121	
		+26	120	3,68	1,094	,100	
44	I look for definitions and paraphrases to support my guesses.	12 - 14	89	3,31	1,083	,115	,001
		15 - 17	239	3,49	1,141	,074	
		18 - 20	74	3,51	1,173	,136	
		21 - 23	123	3,77	1,023	,092	
		24 - 26	48	3,88	,914	,132	
		+26	89	3,31	1,083	,115	
45	I check my hypothesis in context.	12 - 14	88	3,16	1,294	,138	,044
		15 - 17	240	3,58	1,313	,085	
		18 - 20	74	3,59	1,146	,133	
		21 - 23	123	3,71	1,122	,101	
		24 - 26	48	3,58	1,182	,171	
		+26	117	3,62	1,188	,110	
46	I try to find out meaning by dividing word into chunks.	12 - 14	89	2,53	1,382	,147	,000
		15 - 17	238	2,03	1,244	,081	
		18 - 20	74	2,38	1,421	,165	
		21 - 23	123	3,20	1,359	,123	
		24 - 26	48	3,08	1,182	,171	
		+26	121	3,09	1,461	,133	
47	I derive hypothesis by applying general rules.	12 - 14	88	2,92	1,243	,133	,000
		15 - 17	238	2,68	1,204	,078	
		18 - 20	74	2,73	1,231	,143	
		21 - 23	123	3,36	1,188	,107	
		24 - 26	48	3,02	1,158	,167	
		+26	121	3,12	1,282	,117	
48	I use common sense and previous knowledge to understand meaning.	12 - 14	88	3,61	1,066	,114	,000
		15 - 17	239	3,74	1,045	,068	
		18 - 20	74	3,72	,973	,113	
		21 - 23	123	4,28	,705	,064	
		24 - 26	48	4,08	,846	,122	
		+26	121	4,07	,858	,078	
49	I understand word meaning by comparing word parts (sounds, roots...) to my native language.	12 - 14	87	2,89	1,307	,140	,000
		15 - 17	238	2,33	1,287	,083	
		18 - 20	74	2,20	1,158	,135	
		21 - 23	123	2,65	1,201	,108	
		24 - 26	48	2,71	1,202	,174	
		+26	121	2,74	1,283	,117	
50	I understand word meaning by translating it into my native language.	12 - 14	86	3,59	1,250	,135	,005
		15 - 17	240	3,63	1,214	,078	
		18 - 20	74	3,27	1,264	,147	
		21 - 23	123	3,20	1,173	,106	
		24 - 26	48	3,23	1,077	,155	
		+26	119	3,28	1,134	,104	

As for dictionary strategies, all students considered dictionaries a useful tool (all average means over 3.5), especially older learners, either to confirm hypotheses about the meaning of a word or to consult sample sentences illustrating word meaning. However, whereas older students paid attention to

many aspects of a word beyond meaning (pronunciation, contexts of occurrence...), younger learners simply focused on meaning. The same happens with monolingual dictionaries, which, as expected, were reported as moderately used by older students and quite infrequently among the youngest learners, as can be gathered from Table 44 below:

Table 44: Differences in learners' exploitation of meaning discovery/understanding strategies according to age (Part 2)

ITEM	DISCOVERY STRATEGIES	SOURCE	N	X	SD	SE	P
52	I look up words in a dictionary to confirm the guessed meaning.	12 - 14	88	3,68	1,335	,142	,001
		15 - 17	240	3,82	1,138	,073	
		18 - 20	73	3,81	1,174	,137	
		21 - 23	123	4,02	,979	,088	
		24 - 26	48	4,10	,831	,120	
		+26	121	4,26	,854	,078	
54	I read sample sentences illustrating the different senses of a word.	12 - 14	86	3,77	1,243	,134	,000
		15 - 17	238	3,83	1,266	,082	
		18 - 20	73	3,70	1,244	,146	
		21 - 23	123	4,31	,870	,078	
		24 - 26	48	4,44	,712	,103	
		+26	120	4,38	,842	,077	
55	I pay attention to many word aspects, not only meaning.	12 - 14	89	3,30	1,369	,145	,000
		15 - 17	239	3,11	1,328	,086	
		18 - 20	73	3,25	1,199	,140	
		21 - 23	123	3,89	1,144	,103	
		24 - 26	48	3,94	1,099	,159	
		+26	120	4,03	1,065	,097	
56	I make use of monolingual dictionaries.	12 - 14	86	2,72	1,539	,166	,000
		15 - 17	238	2,04	1,391	,090	
		18 - 20	73	2,49	1,501	,176	
		21 - 23	123	3,24	1,339	,121	
		24 - 26	48	3,13	1,362	,197	
		+26	121	2,88	1,404	,128	
57	I ask the teacher for an explanation or translation.	12 - 14	89	3,75	1,141	,121	,000
		15 - 17	239	3,67	1,135	,073	
		18 - 20	73	3,36	1,206	,141	
		21 - 23	123	3,03	1,173	,106	
		24 - 26	48	3,23	1,077	,155	
		+26	121	3,34	1,151	,105	
58	I ask the teacher for a sentence including the new word.	12 - 14	89	3,09	1,337	,142	,000
		15 - 17	239	2,24	1,152	,075	
		18 - 20	73	2,53	1,119	,131	
		21 - 23	123	2,67	1,178	,106	
		24 - 26	48	2,73	1,180	,170	
		+26	121	2,76	1,176	,107	
59	I ask my classmates for word meaning.	12 - 14	89	3,00	1,306	,138	,000
		15 - 17	238	3,40	1,185	,077	
		18 - 20	73	3,41	1,165	,136	
		21 - 23	123	3,35	1,194	,108	
		24 - 26	48	3,08	1,088	,157	
		+26	121	2,86	1,135	,103	

Finally, roughly speaking, participants rated the asking for help from the teacher with medium values; the scores of young learners were slightly higher

than those obtained by the oldest learners, who seemed to be more self-reliant. What is more, students whose ages ranged from 12 to 17 declared demanding an explanation or translation of new words from teachers very frequently (both means over 3.5). This was an expected result, indeed, since older learners are supposed to be more autonomous than younger ones.

The lowest rated subscale of learning strategies, that is, storage into memory techniques, was also a source of divergence. As illustrated in table 45, repetition, either oral or written, was predominantly used by younger learners (especially the former), whilst older learners reported a moderate use of the oral version and an infrequent use of written rehearsal.

Thus, the most sophisticated techniques were preferably used by aged learners and older students outscored younger ones in grouping words related to the same everyday life situation and in remembering collocational sets or the sentence in which the word was inserted. The case of memorising common suffixes or prefixes is even clearer: older students resorted to this technique to a medium extent, whereas younger ones (12-20 years old) did it quite infrequently. The same could be stated for creating semantic networks to remember words in meaningful groups, with the sole exception of the 12-14 group, who had clearly reported a higher overall use of storage into memory techniques. The only strategy which was clearly more strongly favoured by younger learners was that of resorting to their mother tongue to create a sentence so as to embed the new word, quite unpopular among their older mates. Finally, older learners frequently

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inserted words into context to recall them better (all means over 3.50), whereas younger ones did so more moderately.

Table 45: Differences in learners' exploitation of storage into memory strategies according to age (Part 1)

ITEM	STORAGE INTO MEMORY STRATEGIES	SOURCE	N	X	SD	SE	P
61	I repeat words aloud to memorise them.	12 - 14	88	3,51	1,414	,151	,000
		15 - 17	238	3,06	1,369	,089	
		18 - 20	74	2,95	1,157	,135	
		21 - 23	123	2,92	1,291	,116	
		24 - 26	49	2,84	1,313	,188	
		+26	121	2,60	1,261	,115	
62	I write down words to memorise them.	12 - 14	89	3,13	1,440	,153	,001
		15 - 17	238	2,70	1,397	,091	
		18 - 20	74	2,53	1,285	,149	
		21 - 23	122	2,66	1,271	,115	
		24 - 26	49	2,35	1,234	,176	
		+26	121	2,35	1,223	,111	
65	I group words related to the same situation to remember them.	12 - 14	88	2,97	1,360	,145	,000
		15 - 17	237	2,77	1,246	,081	
		18 - 20	74	2,77	1,360	,158	
		21 - 23	123	3,24	1,276	,115	
		24 - 26	49	3,37	1,167	,167	
		+26	121	3,30	1,167	,106	
67	I analyse word parts and memorise the most commonly used prefixes and suffixes.	12 - 14	88	2,48	1,406	,150	,000
		15 - 17	236	1,83	1,070	,070	
		18 - 20	74	2,24	1,191	,138	
		21 - 23	123	2,43	1,146	,103	
		24 - 26	48	2,52	1,203	,174	
		+26	119	2,62	1,262	,116	
68	I pay attention to collocations to remember them as fixed expressions.	12 - 14	89	3,02	1,279	,136	,000
		15 - 17	237	2,60	1,151	,075	
		18 - 20	73	2,86	1,122	,131	
		21 - 23	122	3,08	1,132	,103	
		24 - 26	49	2,94	1,197	,171	
		+26	118	3,14	1,154	,106	
69	I create semantic networks and meaningful groups of words.	12 - 14	87	2,98	1,110	,119	,000
		15 - 17	237	2,48	1,156	,075	
		18 - 20	73	2,59	1,165	,136	
		21 - 23	123	2,98	1,123	,101	
		24 - 26	49	2,90	1,229	,176	
		+26	120	2,88	1,206	,110	
71	I create a sentence in my own language so as to link new and known words.	12 - 14	89	3,26	1,266	,134	,000
		15 - 17	235	2,65	1,229	,080	
		18 - 20	74	2,39	1,259	,146	
		21 - 23	123	2,42	1,109	,100	
		24 - 26	49	2,16	,898	,128	
		+26	120	2,38	1,117	,102	
72	I remember the sentence in which a word was embedded.	12 - 14	88	3,23	1,201	,128	,003
		15 - 17	238	2,79	1,260	,082	
		18 - 20	74	2,72	1,165	,135	
		21 - 23	123	2,95	1,220	,110	
		24 - 26	49	2,82	1,149	,164	
		+26	119	3,21	1,141	,105	
73	I learn words better by putting them into different contexts.	12 - 14	89	3,00	1,288	,137	,000
		15 - 17	238	3,33	1,111	,072	
		18 - 20	73	3,34	1,157	,135	
		21 - 23	123	3,80	,949	,086	
		24 - 26	49	3,76	,804	,115	
		+26	121	3,97	1,016	,092	

The remaining memory strategies show a crucial divergence between the youngest learners (12-14) and the rest of the age groups. Table 46 shows that the former relied more on visual and oral cues to remember words.

Indeed, within overall infrequent employment of these techniques, one could argue the preference of 12-14 year-old subjects for using semantic maps or diagrams and for creating rhymes to recall words. The keyword method was reported as medium use only by the youngest group, in contrast with the low scores obtained for the remaining groups of students. This is a curious fact on its own, because this method is a quite elaborated one, relying on visual and aural cues all together. Then it is remarkable that younger students resort to complex learning strategies in spite of their short learning experience. Finally, associating English words by the way they sound were more popular than the previous techniques, showing a divergence between younger participants' scores (medium) and older ones (24 onwards= low).

As for reviewing acquired words, all participants confirmed reviewing vocabulary from time to time, especially older age groups (21 onwards) and the youngest one (12-14). The same could be argued for self-assessment using vocabulary tests, where most people did not rely on this type of self-evaluation, except for, curiously enough, the youngest and the oldest groups, who reported doing it to a medium extent. Moreover, the youngest individuals (12-14) were more prone to employing action to recall vocabulary better, since they showed the highest scores for the total physical response method and acting out the meaning of a word; in contrast, this was rejected by the rest of the subjects. The

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same distinction applies to the use of flashcards, whereas older learners are more used to taking notes on some of the unfamiliar words they come across.

Table 46: Differences in learners' exploitation of storage into memory strategies according to age (Part 2)

ITEM	STORAGE INTO MEMORY STRATEGIES	SOURCE	N	X	SD	SE	P
76	Semantic map or diagrams.	12 - 14	89	2,39	1,230	,130	,000
		15 - 17	237	1,68	1,033	,067	
		18 - 20	73	1,74	1,028	,120	
		21 - 23	121	1,72	1,027	,093	
		24 - 26	49	1,71	,957	,137	
		+26	120	1,77	,994	,091	
77	Keyword method.	12 - 14	89	2,93	1,347	,143	,000
		15 - 17	237	2,40	1,310	,085	
		18 - 20	73	2,18	1,194	,140	
		21 - 23	122	2,01	1,161	,105	
		24 - 26	49	1,67	1,008	,144	
		+26	120	1,78	1,030	,094	
78	I associate the new word to a known English word that sounds similar.	12 - 14	88	3,27	1,275	,136	,000
		15 - 17	237	2,78	1,270	,082	
		18 - 20	72	2,50	1,151	,136	
		21 - 23	123	2,54	1,256	,113	
		24 - 26	49	2,20	1,172	,167	
		+26	121	2,49	1,285	,117	
79	I create rhymes to remember English words.	12 - 14	89	2,45	1,323	,140	,000
		15 - 17	237	1,75	1,140	,074	
		18 - 20	72	1,76	1,120	,132	
		21 - 23	123	1,89	1,266	,114	
		24 - 26	49	1,63	,972	,139	
		+26	121	1,50	,886	,081	
80	I review words from time to time.	12 - 14	89	3,31	1,221	,129	,001
		15 - 17	237	2,72	1,178	,077	
		18 - 20	72	2,67	1,126	,133	
		21 - 23	123	2,81	1,074	,097	
		24 - 26	49	3,04	,999	,143	
		+26	121	2,84	1,162	,106	
81	I assess myself with vocabulary tests.	12 - 14	88	2,92	1,432	,153	,000
		15 - 17	236	1,92	1,191	,078	
		18 - 20	70	1,67	,974	,116	
		21 - 23	123	1,74	1,047	,094	
		24 - 26	49	1,92	1,017	,145	
		+26	121	2,13	1,147	,104	
82	Total Physical Response.	12 - 14	87	2,25	1,323	,142	,000
		15 - 17	236	1,53	,906	,059	
		18 - 20	72	1,56	1,086	,128	
		21 - 23	122	1,31	,644	,058	
		24 - 26	49	1,39	,702	,100	
		+26	121	1,35	,750	,068	
83	I physically act out the meaning of new words.	12 - 14	87	2,66	1,218	,131	,000
		15 - 17	236	1,87	1,080	,070	
		18 - 20	73	2,05	1,189	,139	
		21 - 23	123	1,65	1,008	,091	
		24 - 26	49	1,78	1,085	,155	
		+26	121	1,53	,923	,084	
85	I use flashcards.	12 - 14	87	3,01	1,351	,145	,000
		15 - 17	237	2,24	1,377	,089	
		18 - 20	74	2,01	1,199	,139	
		21 - 23	123	1,93	1,341	,121	
		24 - 26	49	1,96	1,353	,193	
		+26	120	1,75	1,190	,109	
86	I take notes on unfamiliar words.	12 - 14	87	3,70	1,240	,133	,002
		15 - 17	235	4,01	1,166	,076	
		18 - 20	74	3,97	1,205	,140	
		21 - 23	123	4,19	,953	,086	
		24 - 26	49	4,22	,823	,118	
		+26	121	4,28	,849	,077	

Alternatively, it could be argued that as the students' age increases, more frequent use of techniques to retrieve words from memory is recorded; however, all the average means fell within the scope of medium use, as illustrated in Table 47:

Table 47: Differences in learners' exploitation of vocabulary retrieval strategies according to age

ITEM	RETRIEVAL STRATEGIES	SOURCE	N	X	SD	SE	P
87	I make use of learnt words in situational sets to retrieve them from memory.	12 - 14	88	2,76	1,304	,139	,002
		15 - 17	235	2,73	1,117	,073	
		18 - 20	73	2,96	1,086	,127	
		21 - 23	123	3,12	1,219	,110	
		24 - 26	49	3,12	1,092	,156	
		+26	121	3,17	1,093	,099	
89	I make use of learnt words in collocational sets to retrieve them from memory.	12 - 14	87	2,99	1,029	,110	,002
		15 - 17	237	2,65	1,183	,077	
		18 - 20	73	2,92	1,211	,142	
		21 - 23	123	3,12	1,106	,100	
		24 - 26	49	2,78	1,123	,160	
		+26	120	3,04	1,141	,104	

The same tendency to increase the frequency of use by older students could apply to those techniques that are employed to put learnt vocabulary to use. Whilst younger learners (12-17) declared to search opportunities to make use of known words in the English media or the new technologies only moderately, older individuals acknowledged these materials as frequent tools. Indeed, all of them stated trying to use newly learnt words in speech or writing to a medium extent though older subjects' means were slightly higher.

Table 48: Differences in learners' exploitation of vocabulary use strategies according to age

ITEM	VOCAB. USE STRATEGIES	SOURCE	N	X	SD	SE	P
90	I read and employ English media to practice words I am already familiar with.	12 - 14	88	2,95	1,286	,137	,000
		15 - 17	235	3,06	1,308	,085	
		18 - 20	74	3,57	1,195	,139	
		21 - 23	123	3,97	1,130	,102	
		24 - 26	49	4,04	,935	,134	
		+26	121	3,75	1,051	,096	
92	I use known vocabulary in speech and writing.	12 - 14	88	3,02	1,144	,122	,002
		15 - 17	236	2,89	1,224	,080	
		18 - 20	72	3,04	1,261	,149	
		21 - 23	121	3,34	1,137	,103	
		24 - 26	48	3,35	1,139	,164	
		+26	121	3,30	1,108	,101	

To end with this section, the most frequently employed category of vocabulary strategies, metacognitive strategies, shows a clear discrepancy between younger and older students, as illustrated in Table 49:

Table 49: Differences in learners' exploitation of metacognitive strategies according to age

ITEM	METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES	SOURCE	N	X	SD	SE	P
94	I know whether a word is essential for me to understand a text.	12 - 14	87	3,46	1,119	,120	,000
		15 - 17	237	3,27	1,125	,073	
		18 - 20	73	3,51	1,082	,127	
		21 - 23	123	3,89	,925	,083	
		24 - 26	49	3,86	,913	,130	
		+26	121	3,70	,891	,081	
95	I know whether a word is essential for me to learn.	12 - 14	85	3,46	1,075	,117	,001
		15 - 17	235	3,36	1,102	,072	
		18 - 20	74	3,47	1,010	,117	
		21 - 23	123	3,76	,995	,090	
		24 - 26	49	3,86	,957	,137	
		+26	120	3,66	,804	,073	
96	I know how to use clues to understand meaning.	12 - 14	88	3,36	1,147	,122	,000
		15 - 17	237	3,04	1,132	,074	
		18 - 20	74	3,20	1,122	,130	
		21 - 23	122	3,52	,989	,090	
		24 - 26	49	3,71	,935	,134	
		+26	120	3,33	1,007	,092	
98	I look for other materials to read apart from textbooks.	12 - 14	87	2,56	1,412	,151	,000
		15 - 17	236	2,20	1,320	,086	
		18 - 20	74	2,96	1,418	,165	
		21 - 23	122	3,71	1,314	,119	
		24 - 26	49	3,78	1,006	,144	
		+26	121	3,61	1,165	,106	
99	I only learn vocabulary taught by the teacher.	12 - 14	88	3,60	1,291	,138	,000
		15 - 17	237	2,95	1,437	,093	
		18 - 20	74	2,58	1,335	,155	
		21 - 23	123	1,94	1,027	,093	
		24 - 26	49	1,88	,992	,142	
		+26	121	2,04	1,114	,101	
100	I only focus on vocabulary related to exams.	12 - 14	88	3,31	1,342	,143	,000
		15 - 17	237	2,68	1,390	,090	
		18 - 20	74	2,69	1,344	,156	
		21 - 23	123	1,80	,989	,089	
		24 - 26	49	1,71	,913	,130	
		+26	121	1,93	1,146	,104	

On the one hand, older learners showed particular techniques to learn vocabulary. They have no problem identifying words which are basic to understand a paragraph or essential to retain in their memory and they also know how to use clues to guess word meaning (all means above 3,5). Conversely, younger learners (up to 20 years old, even) confessed to being less sure about how to face vocabulary learning.

On the contrary, older learners seek opportunities to learn vocabulary from other sources, such as books, mass media, the Internet and so on to a much higher extent than their younger counterparts. What is more, 12-14 year old students admitted learning only vocabulary taught by their English teacher. Although students aged up to 20 also reported focusing on items taught in class to a medium extent, they seemed to be more independent and the same applies to item 100, i.e. "focusing only on vocabulary related to examinations". On the contrary, older learners were much more self-didactic in vocabulary learning.

In this light, it could be argued that the differences between the age groups and their reported beliefs about vocabulary and strategy use were quite relevant, suggesting that the participants were remarkably heterogeneous in their responses.

Roughly speaking, older learners outscored younger ones in four out of five categories of vocabulary learning strategies, i.e. discovery, vocabulary retrieval, vocabulary use and metacognitive techniques. Conversely, younger students seemed to be more attached to memory strategies. This must be taken into account for further analysis.

4.1.1.4.3. Differences according to the grade variable

The grade level factor was considered in order to compare possible variations between beliefs and strategies used by students during their process of learning English, from compulsory school to further post-compulsory education. The fact that the age variable had proven to be relevant and that some other research had considered this background factor encouraged us to study it in close detail. To be

more exact, different learning strategies across grade levels have been identified in studies such as the one conducted by Zimmerman and Martínez-Pons (1990), or Chamot and El-Dinary (1999), just to mention a few. From the beginning, we expected a clear correlation between age and grade level results.

◆ **Beliefs about vocabulary learning:**

Differences between subjects' answers according to the grade variable were observed when students were asked about their beliefs concerning vocabulary learning. Indeed, significant differences were found in 24 of the total number of 34, which indicates a relevant response disparity, as illustrated in Table 50.

As regards motivational aspects, compulsory secondary education and post-compulsory secondary education subjects, from now onwards ESO and BAC students, expressed a moderate liking towards learning and using vocabulary,³¹ whereas the remaining grade levels (university, schools of languages and other institutions such as the Modern Language Centre, from now onwards UNI, EOI and OTH) were much more willing to learn and use it. Then, all groups acknowledged the importance of learning vocabulary to find a good job, with the sole exception of the OTH group, who were not that optimistic. Besides, UNI, EOI and OTH students firmly believed in vocabulary as a tool to understand materials in English and to communicate with foreign people (all means over 3.5), whilst ESO and BAC were less clear in their opinions.

³¹ Curiously, 1st and 2nd year ESO students broke this homogeneity when they reported their likes for learning vocabulary.

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All subjects perceived themselves as moderately successful in learning vocabulary and moderately satisfied with their vocabulary size. Moreover, 3rd-4th year ESO learners felt their lexicon was quite limited. Finally, they all reported making a medium effort in vocabulary learning (only 1st-2nd year students declared a great effort) and sometimes giving up studying if materials were boring, except for 3rd-4th year ESO and EOI students, who claimed to quit quite infrequently.

Table 50: Differences in students' beliefs about vocabulary learning according to the grade variable (Part 1)

ITEM	BELIEF STATEMENT	SOURCE	N	X	SD	SE	P
7	I Like learning vocabulary.	1 st -2 nd ESO	73	3,60	1,051	,123	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	59	3,12	1,161	,151	
		BAC	218	3,34	1,190	,081	
		UNI	134	4,30	,804	,069	
		EOI	194	4,25	,883	,063	
8	I like using vocabulary.	OTHER	33	4,12	,927	,161	,000
		1 st -2 nd ESO	73	3,42	1,142	,134	
		3 rd -4 th ESO	59	3,03	1,426	,186	
		BAC	217	3,23	1,306	,089	
		UNI	134	4,31	,871	,075	
9	It is useful to find a good job.	EOI	192	3,96	1,043	,075	,000
		OTHER	33	4,30	,728	,127	
		1 st -2 nd ESO	73	3,99	1,136	,133	
		3 rd -4 th ESO	59	3,98	1,196	,156	
		BAC	216	3,70	1,245	,085	
10	It is useful to understand things.	UNI	134	4,11	,978	,085	,000
		EOI	193	3,55	1,310	,094	
		OTHER	33	3,42	1,091	,190	
		1 st -2 nd ESO	73	3,10	1,416	,166	
		3 rd -4 th ESO	58	3,09	1,466	,193	
11	It is useful to communicate.	BAC	219	3,06	1,275	,086	,000
		UNI	134	3,54	1,101	,095	
		EOI	191	3,68	1,004	,073	
		OTHER	33	3,85	1,121	,195	
		1 st -2 nd ESO	73	3,38	1,411	,165	
12	I am good at learning vocabulary.	3 rd -4 th ESO	57	3,58	1,194	,158	,000
		BAC	218	3,07	1,446	,098	
		UNI	134	4,02	1,051	,091	
		EOI	191	3,92	1,087	,079	
		OTHER	31	3,84	1,068	,192	
13	I feel that I do not master enough vocabulary.	1 st -2 nd ESO	73	3,12	1,190	,139	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	59	2,81	1,252	,163	
		BAC	218	2,87	1,192	,081	
		UNI	132	3,47	,953	,083	
		EOI	192	3,23	,932	,067	
16	I give up if materials are boring.	OTHER	33	3,48	,906	,158	,000
		1 st -2 nd ESO	71	2,79	1,341	,159	
		3 rd -4 th ESO	57	2,42	1,281	,170	
		BAC	219	2,61	1,177	,080	
		UNI	134	3,09	,921	,080	
17	I make a great effort to learn vocabulary.	EOI	193	2,99	,955	,069	,000
		OTHER	33	3,00	,901	,157	
		1 st -2 nd ESO	73	2,55	1,482	,173	
		3 rd -4 th ESO	58	2,40	1,213	,159	
		BAC	218	2,97	1,391	,094	
17	I make a great effort to learn vocabulary.	UNI	134	3,04	1,241	,107	,000
		EOI	194	2,39	1,165	,084	
		OTHER	33	3,36	1,113	,194	
		1 st -2 nd ESO	72	3,64	1,130	,133	
		3 rd -4 th ESO	59	3,02	1,196	,156	
17	I make a great effort to learn vocabulary.	BAC	219	2,94	1,076	,073	,000
		UNI	134	3,29	,941	,081	
		EOI	194	3,22	,860	,062	
		OTHER	33	2,79	,927	,161	
		1 st -2 nd ESO	72	3,64	1,130	,133	

As for the linguistic aspects related to the learning of vocabulary, Table 51 shows that all groups of participants firmly believed that the culture of a particular community is reflected in its vocabulary (all means over 3.50), except for ESO pupils, who were less determined about it. Again, all groups considered the difficulty of English vocabulary as medium but this was not the case of UNI learners, whose specialisation made them qualify it as not difficult. Finally, UNI, EOI and OTH subjects disagreed with the statement that learning a FL was essentially learning its vocabulary, whilst ESO and BAC students were less reticent about it.

Table 51: Differences in students' beliefs about vocabulary learning according to the grade variable (Part 2)

ITEM	BELIEF STATEMENT	SOURCE	N	X	SD	SE	P
18	The culture of a community is reflected in its vocabulary.	1 st -2 nd ESO	66	3,41	1,202	,148	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	57	3,28	1,236	,164	
		BAC	218	3,87	1,039	,070	
		UNI	133	4,22	,907	,079	
		EOI	193	3,87	1,020	,073	
OTHER	33	3,94	1,144	,199			
19	Learning a FL is essentially learning its vocabulary.	1 st -2 nd ESO	73	3,45	1,302	,152	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	58	3,03	1,451	,190	
		BAC	216	2,90	1,159	,079	
		UNI	133	2,26	1,036	,090	
		EOI	194	2,35	1,043	,075	
OTHER	33	2,30	,984	,171			
21	English vocabulary is difficult to learn.	1 st -2 nd ESO	73	3,12	1,269	,148	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	59	3,34	1,169	,152	
		BAC	219	2,97	1,075	,073	
		UNI	134	2,34	,933	,081	
		EOI	194	2,71	1,058	,076	
OTHER	33	2,61	,998	,174			

On the other hand, Table 52 contains students' beliefs about vocabulary learning. As can be seen, their responses were more homogeneous. For example, they all agreed on the fact that using FL vocabulary was better than memorising particular words, but UNI's, EOI's and OTH's scores were slightly higher. The same applies to item 22, self-learning, which all participants considered a good way of learning to a medium extent; however, 1st-2nd ESO, BAC and UNI were a little more

supportive. Nevertheless, there were two items where clearer discrepancies occurred: all groups moderately favoured the idea that vocabulary can only be taught within a context, except for 3rd-4th year ESO students, who considered that out-of-context teaching was also possible. The second example shows that the younger the learner, the more is for memorisation of individual items as one of the best ways to learn vocabulary, ranging from UNI, EOI and OTH low scores (all under 2.5), to 3rd-4th year ESO and BAC medium scores to 1st-2nd year ESO high ones (3.56).

Table 52: Differences in students' beliefs about vocabulary learning according to the grade variable (Part 3)

ITEM	BELIEF STATEMENT	SOURCE	N	X	SD	SE	P
22	Self-learning is the best way to learn vocabulary.	1 st -2 nd ESO	71	3,42	1,284	,152	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	58	2,93	1,137	,149	
		BAC	216	3,25	1,110	,076	
		UNI	134	3,27	1,042	,090	
		EOI	192	2,82	1,053	,076	
		OTHER	33	2,73	,876	,152	
24	Vocabulary can only be learnt in context.	1 st -2 nd ESO	70	2,69	1,246	,149	,005
		3 rd -4 th ESO	59	2,44	1,193	,155	
		BAC	215	2,80	1,212	,083	
		UNI	133	3,11	1,257	,109	
		EOI	191	2,88	1,261	,091	
		OTHER	33	3,21	1,023	,178	
27	One can only learn vocabulary by memorising individual words.	1 st -2 nd ESO	73	3,56	1,384	,162	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	59	3,05	1,224	,159	
		BAC	218	2,82	1,244	,084	
		UNI	134	2,09	1,015	,088	
		EOI	192	2,32	1,038	,075	
		OTHER	33	2,21	,927	,161	
29	Using vocabulary is more important than memorising words.	1 st -2 nd ESO	73	4,37	,950	,111	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	59	4,31	,987	,129	
		BAC	218	4,52	,849	,057	
		UNI	134	4,72	,529	,046	
		EOI	193	4,63	,650	,047	
		OTHER	33	4,82	,465	,081	

With regard to vocabulary teaching and assessment, Table 53 shows that everyone firmly believed that learners should know more than the TL equivalent, but also form, meaning and usage, with averages increasing from compulsory to non compulsory groups. They also claimed that vocabulary should be taught in a clear and systematic way, with averages increasing the other way round this time

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(from OTH to ESO), and that words should be presented in groups, not individually, except for OTH students, whose mean (3,48) was slightly lower.

Table 53: Differences in students' beliefs about vocabulary learning according to the grade variable (Part 4)

ITEM	BELIEF STATEMENT	SOURCE	N	X	SD	SE	P
30	The least a learner should know about a word is form, meaning and basic use, not only its translation.	1 st -2 nd ESO	72	3,75	1,196	,141	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	59	3,86	1,106	,144	
		BAC	216	3,86	1,069	,073	
		UNI	134	4,46	,762	,066	
		EOI	193	4,02	,952	,069	
		OTHER	33	4,15	,667	,116	
31	Vocabulary must be taught in a systematic and clear way.	1 st -2 nd ESO	72	4,54	,711	,084	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	59	4,08	1,103	,144	
		BAC	218	3,82	1,090	,074	
		UNI	133	3,89	1,005	,087	
		EOI	190	3,61	,952	,069	
		OTHER	33	3,76	,936	,163	
32	Words must not be presented in isolation but in semantic groups.	1 st -2 nd ESO	72	3,50	1,374	,162	,004
		3 rd -4 th ESO	59	4,22	,911	,119	
		BAC	217	3,72	1,198	,081	
		UNI	134	3,83	1,134	,098	
		EOI	191	3,61	1,113	,081	
		OTHER	33	3,48	1,149	,200	
33	It is important to pay attention to word structure.	1 st -2 nd ESO	73	4,11	1,021	,120	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	58	3,67	1,015	,133	
		BAC	215	3,48	1,004	,068	
		UNI	134	3,66	,894	,077	
		EOI	190	3,43	,933	,068	
		OTHER	31	3,42	,886	,159	
34	Out-of-context teaching should be completed with in-context one.	1 st -2 nd ESO	68	3,26	1,128	,137	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	57	3,53	1,020	,135	
		BAC	216	3,86	,959	,065	
		UNI	131	4,16	,792	,069	
		EOI	192	3,98	,837	,060	
		OTHER	33	4,06	,704	,123	
35	Teachers should make word lists.	1 st -2 nd ESO	73	3,92	1,222	,143	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	58	3,76	1,261	,166	
		BAC	217	3,33	1,347	,091	
		UNI	131	3,20	1,173	,102	
		EOI	191	2,95	1,146	,083	
		OTHER	33	3,30	1,015	,177	
36	Teachers' role: explaining meaning in context.	1 st -2 nd ESO	71	3,48	1,182	,140	,002
		3 rd -4 th ESO	58	3,19	1,317	,173	
		BAC	215	3,11	1,269	,087	
		UNI	134	3,02	1,153	,100	
		EOI	193	2,82	1,183	,085	
		OTHER	33	2,73	1,257	,219	
39	Vocabulary tests must be based on lists of the most frequently used words.	1 st -2 nd ESO	71	3,75	1,262	,150	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	59	3,58	1,163	,151	
		BAC	216	3,25	1,269	,086	
		UNI	134	2,77	1,089	,094	
		EOI	192	2,69	1,151	,083	
		OTHER	33	2,70	1,045	,182	

Moreover, within a framework of moderate approval, 1st-2nd ESO pupils showed more security when claiming that the role of teachers is to explain word meaning in its context of occurrence (item 36). Nevertheless, a greater discrepancy arose with the other statements. Indeed, everyone acknowledged the

importance of word formal structure, except for BAC, EOI and OTH groups, who were less determined (all means below 3.5) and the same applies to the belief that out-of-context teaching must be completed with in-context one, where 1st-2nd ESO learners seemed to be more dubious about it than the remaining groups. However, the creation of word lists by teachers was openly supported by ESO pupils (means=3.92 and 3.76), though more moderately by the remaining participants. Finally, once again, ESO students approved the designing of vocabulary tests based on frequency lists, in contrast with much lower scores obtained for the rest of the groups.

It seems clear then that ESO students were, as expected, somehow the main source of divergence among all the grade level groups, which is in accordance with the data gathered from the age variable analysis.

◆ **Variation in overall strategy use**

According to average means obtained for the six grade level groups, significant differences were observed for the five subscales, where metacognitive strategies obtained again scores over 3.5, as depicted in Figure 19 and Table 54. For the remaining strategies subscales, the overall reported use of strategies fell within the category of medium use.

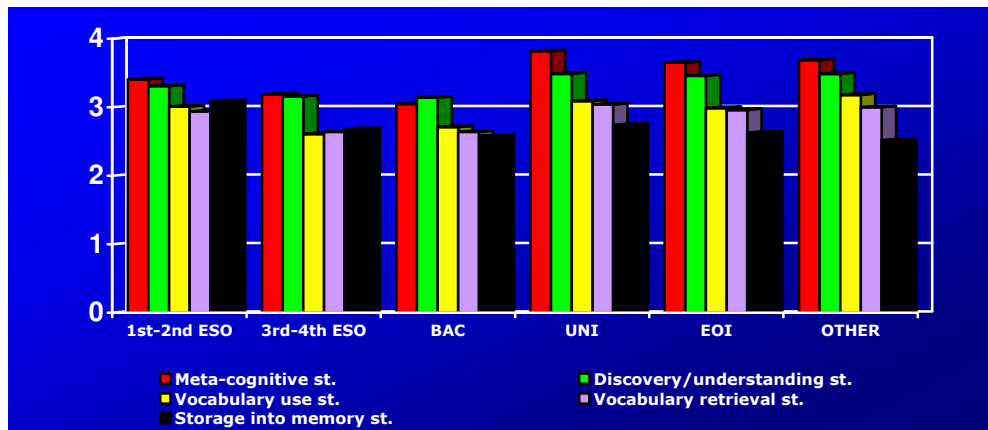


Figure 19: Differences in VLS use according to the grade variable

Table 54: Differences in the use of VLS categories according to the grade variable

CATEGORY	SOURCE	N	X	SD	SE	P
Discovery strategies	1st-2nd ESO	73	3,32	0,606	0,071	,000
	3rd-4th ESO	59	3,14	0,57	0,074	
	BAC	218	3,13	0,471	0,032	
	UNI	134	3,48	0,413	0,036	
	EOI	194	3,44	0,459	0,033	
	OTHER	33	3,42	0,553	0,096	
Storage into memory	1st-2nd ESO	72	3,09	0,611	0,072	,000
	3rd-4th ESO	59	2,68	0,538	0,07	
	BAC	218	2,6	0,584	0,04	
	UNI	134	2,74	0,511	0,044	
	EOI	194	2,63	0,497	0,036	
	OTHER	33	2,52	0,539	0,094	
Vocabulary retrieval	1st-2nd ESO	71	2,93	0,866	0,103	,000
	3rd-4th ESO	59	2,64	0,899	0,117	
	BAC	213	2,64	0,905	0,062	
	UNI	134	3,04	0,933	0,081	
	EOI	194	2,96	0,918	0,066	
	OTHER	33	3	0,993	0,173	
Vocabulary use	1st-2nd ESO	71	3,01	0,854	0,101	,000
	3rd-4th ESO	59	2,61	0,711	0,093	
	BAC	214	2,71	0,951	0,065	
	UNI	134	3,09	0,743	0,064	
	EOI	194	2,99	0,73	0,052	
	OTHER	33	3,18	0,777	0,135	
Metacognitive	1st-2nd ESO	71	3,41	0,631	0,075	,000
	3rd-4th ESO	59	3,19	0,698	0,091	
	BAC	214	3,05	0,74	0,051	
	UNI	134	3,82	0,638	0,055	
	EOI	193	3,65	0,636	0,046	
	OTHER	33	3,68	0,657	0,114	

Roughly speaking, the students of the different groups made use of strategies to discover and understand word meaning to a moderate extent, with slightly higher scores of UNI, EOI and OTH groups. Then, both retrieval and vocabulary use

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strategies were quite homogeneously used across subjects, with only 3rd-4th year ESO and BAC groups showing lower scores than the remaining ones. Finally, memory strategies were the least frequent category, though it is remarkable how 1st-2nd year ESO learners' average means were slightly higher than those obtained for the rest of the groups.

Table 55: Differences in learners' exploitation of meaning discovery/understanding strategies according to the grade variable (Part 1)

ITEM	DISCOVERY STRATEGIES	SOURCE	N	X	SD	SE	P
41	I guess meaning from context/topic.	1 st -2 nd ESO	72	3,46	1,278	,151	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	59	3,66	1,295	,169	
		BAC	218	4,05	,971	,066	
		UNI	134	4,28	,817	,071	
		EOI	194	4,34	,780	,056	
		OTHER	32	4,28	,683	,121	
42	I look for examples in context to guess meaning.	1 st -2 nd ESO	72	3,46	1,233	,145	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	59	3,39	1,083	,141	
		BAC	217	3,56	1,105	,075	
		UNI	134	3,99	,897	,077	
		EOI	192	3,88	,977	,070	
		OTHER	31	4,16	,688	,124	
43	I find out the logical development of the paragraph to guess word meaning.	1 st -2 nd ESO	72	3,25	1,242	,146	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	59	2,93	1,187	,155	
		BAC	217	3,21	1,127	,076	
		UNI	133	3,58	1,024	,089	
		EOI	192	3,76	1,046	,075	
		OTHER	32	3,75	,984	,174	
44	I look for definitions, paraphrases to support my guesses.	1 st -2 nd ESO	72	3,32	1,032	,122	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	58	3,36	1,210	,159	
		BAC	218	3,40	1,168	,079	
		UNI	134	3,72	1,014	,088	
		EOI	193	3,90	1,003	,072	
		OTHER	32	3,72	1,198	,212	
46	I try to find out meaning by dividing word into chunks.	1 st -2 nd ESO	72	2,51	1,404	,165	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	57	2,32	1,391	,184	
		BAC	218	1,91	1,178	,080	
		UNI	134	3,25	1,318	,114	
		EOI	194	2,92	1,407	,101	
		OTHER	32	3,34	1,405	,248	
47	I derive hypotheses by applying general rules.	1 st -2 nd ESO	70	2,99	1,302	,156	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	59	2,78	1,204	,157	
		BAC	217	2,54	1,159	,079	
		UNI	134	3,31	1,171	,101	
		EOI	193	3,13	1,247	,090	
		OTHER	32	3,19	1,281	,226	
48	I use common sense and previous knowledge to understand meaning.	1 st -2 nd ESO	71	3,65	1,043	,124	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	59	3,53	1,194	,155	
		BAC	217	3,69	1,002	,068	
		UNI	134	4,28	,721	,062	
		EOI	193	4,05	,864	,062	
		OTHER	32	4,16	,884	,156	
49	I understand word meaning by comparing word parts (sounds, roots...) to my native language.	1 st -2 nd ESO	70	3,10	1,241	,148	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	58	2,48	1,392	,183	
		BAC	217	2,20	1,234	,084	
		UNI	134	2,66	1,201	,104	
		EOI	194	2,61	1,239	,089	
		OTHER	32	3,06	1,268	,224	
50	I understand word meaning by translating it into my native language.	1 st -2 nd ESO	70	3,66	1,295	,155	,001
		3 rd -4 th ESO	58	3,72	1,073	,141	
		BAC	218	3,58	1,265	,086	
		UNI	134	3,25	1,212	,105	
		EOI	192	3,19	1,151	,083	
		OTHER	32	3,31	,859	,152	

As regards discovery strategies, the same pattern is observed throughout each of the items reporting significant differences among groups: at the one end, we find the group of ESO and most of the times BAC students while at the other UNI, EOI and OTH learners, as explained above (cf. Table 55).

Guessing strategies (items 41-46) were reported as frequently used by UNI, EOI and OTH groups (all means above 3.5). This contrasted with the average means of ESO and BAC learners; these two groups rated them much lower and in some cases falling to the scope of medium range, especially in the case of 1st-2nd ESO group. Besides, the former groups mentioned the usefulness of dividing words into chunks to guess meaning, a strategy reported as infrequent among our 3rd-4th ESO and BAC subjects.

There was more homogeneity of answers when students were asked about the strategies employed to understand meaning (items 47-48), since they all claimed to apply general rules quite moderately, though UNI, EOI and OTH more frequently. The same tendency was identified with regard to employing common sense and previous knowledge, rated as a frequent technique, but with the scores of the aforementioned groups slightly higher. Conversely, ESO and BAC confessed to relying much more on translation (high) than the other groups (medium). However, they did not resort to comparing parts of source and target language to understand meaning as much as UNI, EOI and OTH did (with the sole exception of 1st-2nd year ESO, who claimed to do so as frequently as the latter).

As far as dictionary strategies are concerned, Table 56 shows that UNI, EOI and OTH learners outscored their ESO and BAC counterparts in reading the sample

sentences illustrating the meaning of the word and even more in paying attention to word aspects other than meaning but pronunciation, derivatives, contexts, etc (high usage in contrast with ESO and BAC medium scores) or using monolingual dictionaries (medium usage in contrast with low one).³²

Table 56: Differences in learners' exploitation of meaning discovery/understanding strategies according to the grade variable (Part 2)

ITEM	DISCOVERY STRATEGIES	SOURCE	N	X	SD	SE	P
54	I read sample sentences illustrating the different senses of a word.	1 st -2 nd ESO	71	3,89	1,178	,140	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	57	3,63	1,277	,169	
		BAC	216	3,75	1,273	,087	
		UNI	134	4,36	,871	,075	
		EOI	192	4,26	,956	,069	
		OTHER	32	4,16	1,194	,211	
55	I pay attention to many word aspects, not only meaning.	1 st -2 nd ESO	72	3,54	1,363	,161	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	59	2,93	1,311	,171	
		BAC	216	2,98	1,301	,089	
		UNI	134	3,98	1,051	,091	
		EOI	193	3,90	1,144	,082	
		OTHER	32	3,63	1,100	,194	
56	I make use of monolingual dictionaries.	1 st -2 nd ESO	71	2,76	1,590	,189	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	55	2,33	1,516	,204	
		BAC	217	2,02	1,372	,093	
		UNI	134	3,37	1,325	,114	
		EOI	194	2,73	1,426	,102	
		OTHER	32	2,84	1,417	,250	
57	I ask the teacher for an explanation or translation.	1 st -2 nd ESO	72	3,82	1,142	,135	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	59	3,68	1,121	,146	
		BAC	216	3,60	1,153	,078	
		UNI	134	2,87	1,166	,101	
		EOI	194	3,44	1,133	,081	
		OTHER	32	3,59	1,132	,200	
58	I ask the teacher for a sentence including the new word.	1 st -2 nd ESO	72	3,26	1,321	,156	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	59	2,12	1,115	,145	
		BAC	216	2,28	1,152	,078	
		UNI	134	2,48	1,095	,095	
		EOI	194	2,80	1,171	,084	
		OTHER	32	3,09	1,329	,235	
59	I ask my classmates for word meaning.	1 st -2 nd ESO	72	2,90	1,302	,153	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	59	3,41	1,219	,159	
		BAC	215	3,38	1,181	,081	
		UNI	134	3,40	1,151	,099	
		EOI	194	3,04	1,193	,086	
		OTHER	32	2,66	1,035	,183	
60	I discover word meaning by means of group activities.	1 st -2 nd ESO	72	2,79	1,342	,158	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	58	2,43	1,258	,165	
		BAC	193	2,19	1,107	,080	
		UNI	109	2,01	1,041	,100	
		EOI	167	2,57	1,032	,080	
		OTHER	32	2,34	,865	,153	

Finally, ESO and BAC students reported asking for assistance to understand meaning more frequently than the remaining groups did. Thus, the former

³² Curiously enough, 1st-2nd ESO students' means were not coincident with the rest of ESO and BAC ones. This should be borne in mind in further analyses.

normally asked the teacher or, to a medium extent, their classmates for a translation. The only item in which UNI, EOI and OTH means were rated more highly was asking the teacher to include the word into a sentence, quite infrequent among ESO and BAC students. Item 60, meaning discovery through group activities was considered as very rare among our sample students, except for 1st-2nd ESO and EOI groups, whose means were slightly higher.

As for storage into memory strategies, Table 57 shows that when students were asked about rehearsal techniques, such as oral and written repetition, learners from EOI and OTH rated it with low figures (item 62), whereas 1st-2nd year ESO students claimed to use them quite frequently (item 61).

Within a general framework of medium usage, strategies that entail mental linkages were less popular among 3rd-4th ESO and BAC students. Their scores were slightly lower when dealing with grouping new words related to the same situation (at the supermarket, having lunch, etc), remembering collocations of words as fixed expressions, searching for synonyms/antonyms in their memory or remembering the sentence in which the new word was embedded (items 65, 68 and 70).

The case of items 67 and 69 is even clearer: while the remaining group of students reported a moderate use of memorising word prefixes and suffixes³³ or creating semantic networks to remember words in meaningful groups, 3rd-4th year ESO and BAC students' scores dropped drastically.

³³ The scores of UNI learners for item 69 and for item 71 are in the borderline between medium and low use. They coincide with those of the most divergent groups (3rd and 4th year ESO and BAC), this fact was contrary to our expectations; however, it does not break the overall same tendency of UNI, ESO and OTH groups.

Table 57: Differences in learners' exploitation of storage into memory strategies according to the grade variable (Part 1)

ITEM	STORAGE INTO MEMORY STRATEGIES	SOURCE	N	X	SD	SE	P
61	I repeat words aloud to memorise them.	1 st -2 nd ESO	72	3,53	1,453	,171	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	58	3,29	1,351	,177	
		BAC	216	3,05	1,313	,089	
		UNI	134	2,99	1,254	,108	
		EOI	194	2,68	1,300	,093	
		OTHER	33	2,55	1,227	,214	
62	I write down words to memorise them.	1 st -2 nd ESO	72	3,40	1,411	,166	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	59	2,73	1,436	,187	
		BAC	216	2,61	1,332	,091	
		UNI	133	2,75	1,264	,110	
		EOI	194	2,37	1,282	,092	
		OTHER	33	2,21	1,244	,217	
65	I group words related to the same situation to remember them.	1 st -2 nd ESO	71	3,01	1,347	,160	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	59	2,69	1,277	,166	
		BAC	216	2,72	1,267	,086	
		UNI	134	3,34	1,232	,106	
		EOI	192	3,22	1,195	,086	
		OTHER	33	2,91	1,378	,240	
67	I analyse word parts and memorise the most commonly used prefixes and suffixes.	1 st -2 nd ESO	71	2,56	1,451	,172	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	59	1,88	1,205	,157	
		BAC	214	1,80	1,043	,071	
		UNI	134	2,49	1,162	,100	
		EOI	191	2,51	1,196	,087	
		OTHER	33	2,79	1,219	,212	
68	I pay attention to collocations to remember them as fixed expressions.	1 st -2 nd ESO	72	3,19	1,241	,146	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	59	2,61	1,260	,164	
		BAC	214	2,61	1,099	,075	
		UNI	133	3,08	1,197	,104	
		EOI	191	3,01	1,172	,085	
		OTHER	33	3,15	1,034	,180	
69	I create semantic networks and meaningful groups of words.	1 st -2 nd ESO	70	3,07	1,159	,138	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	59	2,49	1,209	,157	
		BAC	214	2,45	1,132	,077	
		UNI	134	3,01	1,173	,101	
		EOI	193	2,76	1,145	,082	
		OTHER	32	3,19	1,091	,193	
70	I search for synonyms or antonyms in my memory.	1 st -2 nd ESO	71	3,25	1,250	,148	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	59	3,10	1,322	,172	
		BAC	214	2,84	1,223	,084	
		UNI	134	3,34	1,111	,096	
		EOI	193	3,33	1,100	,079	
		OTHER	33	3,06	1,059	,184	
71	I create a sentence in my own language so as to link new and known words.	1 st -2 nd ESO	72	3,36	1,282	,151	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	59	2,76	1,194	,155	
		BAC	213	2,62	1,248	,085	
		UNI	134	2,52	1,168	,101	
		EOI	193	2,29	1,075	,077	
		OTHER	33	2,09	,947	,165	
72	I remember the sentence in which a word was embedded.	1 st -2 nd ESO	71	3,31	1,190	,141	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	59	2,64	1,186	,154	
		BAC	216	2,69	1,240	,084	
		UNI	134	3,15	1,192	,103	
		EOI	192	2,99	1,204	,087	
		OTHER	33	3,03	,984	,171	
73	I learn words better putting them into context.	1 st -2 nd ESO	72	3,06	1,288	,152	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	59	3,08	1,330	,173	
		BAC	216	3,23	1,092	,074	
		UNI	134	3,85	,962	,083	
		EOI	193	3,83	,977	,070	
		OTHER	33	3,97	,810	,141	

In contrast with the previous findings, all ESO and BAC students agreed on moderately resorting to their mother tongue in order to create a sentence to insert the new word, in contrast with EOI and OTH lower means. Finally, embedding new words in contexts so as to recall them better was highly appreciated by UNI, EOI and OTH participants, whereas among their ESO and BAC counterparts this technique was less frequent; the latter reported making use of context-embedding only to a medium extent.

As shown in Table 58, storage into memory strategies that involve images and sounds were significantly more commonly employed by ESO students, especially by 1st and 2nd ESO pupils. Only ESO learners reported relying on the keyword method and, more particularly, 1st-2nd ESO ones on drawing semantic maps to a medium extent; the rest of the groups, however, rated these techniques as infrequent. As for creating a mental image of the new word (item 74) or associating it with a known one with a similar sound (item 78), they were reported as moderately used, except for EOI and OTH groups (low use). Finally, creating rhymes to remember a word was very unpopular but 1st-2nd ESO scores were slightly higher, perhaps due to the fact that they are starting secondary school and the use of songs and tongue twisters is quite common in primary school.

In addition to that, all groups seemed to review learnt words to a medium extent, although the lower the grade level, the more frequently this was done. Conversely, vocabulary self-testing was not popular among all participants, with the sole exception of 1st-2nd ESO learners, who took word tests more frequently (M=3.15).

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Table 58: Differences in learners' exploitation of storage into memory strategies according to the grade variable (Part 2)

ITEM	STORAGE INTO MEMORY STRATEGIES	SOURCE	N	X	SD	SE	P
74	I create a mental image of the new word to remember it.	1 st -2 nd ESO	72	3,00	1,384	,163	,006
		3 rd -4 th ESO	59	2,58	1,303	,170	
		BAC	213	2,84	1,305	,089	
		UNI	134	2,90	1,256	,108	
		EOI	193	2,51	1,315	,095	
		OTHER	33	2,30	1,287	,224	
76	Semantic map or diagrams.	1 st -2 nd ESO	72	2,50	1,245	,147	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	59	1,78	1,146	,149	
		BAC	214	1,72	1,068	,073	
		UNI	132	1,73	,987	,086	
		EOI	192	1,74	,983	,071	
		OTHER	33	1,39	,609	,106	
77	Keyword method.	1 st -2 nd ESO	72	3,01	1,327	,156	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	59	2,54	1,236	,161	
		BAC	214	2,41	1,321	,090	
		UNI	134	1,97	1,130	,098	
		EOI	192	1,85	1,075	,078	
		OTHER	32	1,56	1,014	,179	
78	I associate the new word with a known English word that sounds similar.	1 st -2 nd ESO	71	3,31	1,390	,165	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	59	3,00	1,160	,151	
		BAC	213	2,80	1,251	,086	
		UNI	134	2,54	1,199	,104	
		EOI	193	2,45	1,266	,091	
		OTHER	33	2,00	1,061	,185	
79	I create rhymes to remember English words.	1 st -2 nd ESO	72	2,46	1,363	,161	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	59	1,93	1,216	,158	
		BAC	213	1,83	1,163	,080	
		UNI	134	1,93	1,266	,109	
		EOI	193	1,53	,913	,066	
		OTHER	33	1,27	,574	,100	
80	I review words from time to time.	1 st -2 nd ESO	72	3,42	1,207	,142	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	59	2,90	1,185	,154	
		BAC	213	2,67	1,192	,082	
		UNI	134	2,78	1,065	,092	
		EOI	193	2,92	1,129	,081	
		OTHER	33	2,55	,905	,157	
81	I assess myself with vocabulary tests.	1 st -2 nd ESO	71	3,15	1,370	,163	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	58	2,09	1,354	,178	
		BAC	211	1,84	1,135	,078	
		UNI	134	1,70	,989	,085	
		EOI	193	2,05	1,126	,081	
		OTHER	33	1,73	,911	,159	
82	Total Physical Response.	1 st -2 nd ESO	70	2,31	1,314	,157	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	58	1,81	1,162	,153	
		BAC	213	1,58	,961	,066	
		UNI	133	1,35	,761	,066	
		EOI	193	1,31	,674	,049	
		OTHER	33	1,18	,465	,081	
83	I physically act out the meaning of new words.	1 st -2 nd ESO	70	2,76	1,233	,147	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	58	2,07	1,106	,145	
		BAC	214	2,02	1,146	,078	
		UNI	133	1,62	,958	,083	
		EOI	193	1,65	1,000	,072	
		OTHER	33	1,27	,674	,117	
85	I use flashcards.	1 st -2 nd ESO	71	3,17	1,341	,159	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	58	2,45	1,465	,192	
		BAC	214	2,20	1,325	,091	
		UNI	134	1,98	1,323	,114	
		EOI	193	1,83	1,236	,089	
		OTHER	33	1,76	1,146	,200	
86	I take notes on words.	1 st -2 nd ESO	71	3,80	1,261	,150	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	58	4,07	1,041	,137	
		BAC	213	3,78	1,244	,085	
		UNI	134	4,10	,995	,086	
		EOI	193	4,37	,833	,060	
		OTHER	33	4,48	,619	,108	

The same tendency could be observed when talking about acting out new words so as to recall them better, where 1st-2nd ESO learners outscored the remaining groups and whose appreciation of the Total Response Method was slightly more positive than the low means reported by their partners. Moreover, using flashcards showed almost the same scores as for the previous “acting out” item; once again, differences are observed between 1st and 2nd year ESO learners and the rest of the groups. Conversely, the figures obtained for taking notes of unfamiliar words are higher in as much the grade level of participants goes up in the educational continuum, being the only storage into memory strategy really employed by all subjects.

Within the category of retrieval techniques, they all fell within the scope of medium use, the means increasing gradually along the grade level, as shown in Table 59.

Table 59: Differences in learners’ exploitation of retrieval strategies according to the grade variable

ITEM	RETRIEVAL STRATEGIES	SOURCE	N	X	SD	SE	P
87	I make use of learnt words in situational sets to retrieve them from memory.	1 st -2 nd ESO	71	2,89	1,337	,159	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	58	2,50	1,143	,150	
		BAC	212	2,72	1,073	,074	
		UNI	134	3,13	1,127	,097	
		EOI	194	3,18	1,144	,082	
		OTHER	33	3,00	1,146	,199	
89	I make use of learnt words in collocational sets to retrieve them from memory.	1 st -2 nd ESO	71	2,99	1,062	,126	,003
		3 rd -4 th ESO	58	2,71	1,228	,161	
		BAC	213	2,66	1,182	,081	
		UNI	134	3,13	1,065	,092	
		EOI	193	2,92	1,161	,084	
		OTHER	33	3,12	1,083	,188	

Table 60 shows that this homogeneity of responses has its final point in the following category of strategies. Indeed, UNI, EOI and OTH employed English language media and technologies to make use of already learnt words very frequently, in contrast with a medium use expressed by ESO and BAC learners.

However, all groups tried to use known vocabulary in speech or writing quite moderately; UNI and EOI means were slightly higher.

Table 60: Differences in learners' exploitation of vocabulary retrieval strategies according to the grade variable

ITEM	VOCAB. USE STRATEGIES	SOURCE	N	X	SD	SE	P
90	I read and employ English media to use learnt words.	1 st -2 nd ESO	71	3,10	1,300	,154	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	57	2,70	1,239	,164	
		BAC	214	3,01	1,278	,087	
		UNI	134	4,00	1,062	,092	
		EOI	194	3,82	1,064	,076	
		OTHER	33	4,09	1,156	,201	
92	I use known vocabulary in speech and writing.	1 st -2 nd ESO	71	3,10	1,173	,139	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	58	2,81	1,115	,146	
		BAC	213	2,78	1,225	,084	
		UNI	131	3,35	1,170	,102	
		EOI	194	3,35	1,092	,078	
		OTHER	32	3,41	1,073	,190	

Finally, metacognitive strategies represent the most obvious division between ESO / BAC and UNI / EOI / OTH learners. As illustrated in Table 61, the latter claimed to know whether a word is either essential to understand a passage and important to learn, and they seem to know how to use clues to understand meaning (all means above 3.50), in contrast with ESO and BAC learners, who were less clear about these items. In addition to this, all students reported using all means in their scope to guess meaning, though UNI, EOI and OTH's scores were slightly higher. However, there was a great discrepancy when learners were asked about whether they read other materials apart from textbooks; once again UNI, EOI and OTH frequent use of other English sources contrasted strongly with ESO and BAC's low scores.

The two remaining items (99, 100) focused on whether students restricted themselves to class vocabulary. As expected, 1st and 2nd year ESO learners normally paid attention only to vocabulary taught by the teacher, coinciding with the results obtained by 3rd-4th year ESO and BAC students, the latter being more

moderate in their replies. Besides, all three groups claimed to focus only on words related to exams to a medium extent. Conversely, UNI, EOI and OTH were absolutely self-didactic and also sought different vocabulary items.

Table 61: Differences in learners' exploitation of metacognitive strategies according to the grade variable

ITEM	METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES	SOURCE	N	X	SD	SE	P
94	I know whether a word is essential for me to understand a text.	1 st -2 nd ESO	71	3,48	1,094	,130	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	58	3,22	1,229	,161	
		BAC	213	3,19	1,114	,076	
		UNI	134	4,05	,861	,074	
		EOI	193	3,68	,923	,066	
		OTHER	33	3,79	,740	,129	
95	I know whether a word is essential for me to learn.	1 st -2 nd ESO	68	3,49	1,099	,133	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	57	3,49	1,212	,161	
		BAC	214	3,23	1,049	,072	
		UNI	134	3,88	,966	,083	
		EOI	192	3,69	,865	,062	
		OTHER	33	3,58	,830	,145	
96	I know how to use clues to understand meaning.	1 st -2 nd ESO	71	3,37	1,198	,142	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	59	3,14	1,121	,146	
		BAC	214	2,95	1,131	,077	
		UNI	134	3,59	,952	,082	
		EOI	191	3,44	,987	,071	
		OTHER	33	3,52	1,004	,175	
98	I look for other materials to read apart from textbooks.	1 st -2 nd ESO	70	2,74	1,441	,172	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	59	2,12	1,261	,164	
		BAC	213	2,08	1,236	,085	
		UNI	134	3,87	1,192	,103	
		EOI	193	3,53	1,203	,087	
		OTHER	32	3,72	1,301	,230	
99	I only learn vocabulary taught by the teacher.	1 st -2 nd ESO	71	3,62	1,313	,156	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	59	3,39	1,365	,178	
		BAC	214	3,01	1,422	,097	
		UNI	134	1,89	1,052	,091	
		EOI	193	2,04	1,082	,078	
		OTHER	33	1,82	,683	,119	
100	I only focus on vocabulary related to exams.	1 st -2 nd ESO	71	3,41	1,358	,161	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	59	2,76	1,318	,172	
		BAC	214	2,90	1,390	,095	
		UNI	134	1,75	,992	,086	
		EOI	193	1,93	1,082	,078	
		OTHER	33	1,67	,890	,155	
101	I use all means available to make words clear.	1 st -2 nd ESO	68	3,81	1,237	,150	,000
		3 rd -4 th ESO	59	3,58	1,206	,157	
		BAC	213	3,60	1,196	,082	
		UNI	134	4,02	,985	,085	
		EOI	192	4,05	1,050	,076	
		OTHER	33	3,85	1,093	,190	

4.1.1.4.4. Differences according to the period of time devoted to the study of English

The last factor considered in this study was the amount of English instruction received by our participants. The idea was to find out whether students with

different prior English knowledge showed different beliefs about vocabulary learning and used and chose the same vocabulary strategies or not. Participants were structured in three groups of five years each, keeping the same division established in the questionnaire. Of the 712 subjects in this study, 58 had had up to five years of EFL formal learning. A total of 410 (the largest group) had had between six and ten years of experience as learners of English, while 235 of them had learning experience superior to 10 years, including, of course, primary education.

◆ **Beliefs about vocabulary learning:**

Roughly speaking, this variable proved to be the one with the least number of significant differences. Thus, only 10 out of a total of 34 items reflected relevant discrepancies, as shown in Table 62.

When dealing with students' preferences and their likes for vocabulary learning, it is curious to see how those students with the shortest and the longest learning experience really liked learning and using English vocabulary; the intermediate group (6-10 years), however, was not that enthusiastic. Most experienced students (+10) considered vocabulary as very useful both to understand things they were interested in and to communicate with foreign people. The communicative purpose of vocabulary was also acknowledged by the least experienced group to almost the same extent, though not in the case of understanding things. Moreover, the group of 6-10 years studying English were less clear towards both items (means below 3.5). Lastly, they all perceived

themselves as moderately good at learning vocabulary and their vocabulary stock as medium, with means increasing gradually in parallel to the years of experience.

Table 62: Differences in students' beliefs about vocabulary learning according to the period of EFL instruction

ITEM	BELIEF STATEMENT	SOURCE	N	X	SD	SE	P
7	I Like learning vocabulary.	0-5 years	58	4,05	1,016	,133	,000
		6-10 years	409	3,55	1,162	,057	
		+10 years	235	4,23	,886	,058	
8	I like using vocabulary.	0-5 years	56	3,84	1,108	,148	,000
		6-10 years	409	3,45	1,285	,064	
		+10 years	234	4,05	1,045	,068	
10	It is useful to understand things.	0-5 years	57	3,39	1,386	,184	,001
		6-10 years	409	3,21	1,245	,062	
		+10 years	234	3,58	1,137	,074	
11	It is useful to communicate.	0-5 years	57	3,81	1,217	,161	,000
		6-10 years	407	3,38	1,361	,067	
		+10 years	232	3,90	1,149	,075	
12	I am good at learning vocabulary.	0-5 years	57	2,96	1,210	,160	,000
		6-10 years	408	3,02	1,123	,056	
		+10 years	234	3,35	,980	,064	
13	I feel that I do not master enough vocabulary.	0-5 years	57	2,56	1,118	,148	,001
		6-10 years	408	2,74	1,167	,058	
		+10 years	234	3,03	,947	,062	
19	Learning a FL is essentially learning its vocabulary.	0-5 years	58	2,71	1,364	,179	,001
		6-10 years	407	2,80	1,218	,060	
		+10 years	233	2,42	1,116	,073	
21	English vocabulary is difficult to learn.	0-5 years	58	3,07	1,241	,163	,002
		6-10 years	410	2,89	1,113	,055	
		+10 years	235	2,61	1,050	,068	
27	One can only learn vocabulary by memorising individual words.	0-5 years	57	2,82	1,403	,186	,000
		6-10 years	408	2,78	1,242	,062	
		+10 years	235	2,26	1,100	,072	
39	Vocabulary tests must be based on lists of the most frequently used words.	0-5 years	57	3,07	1,307	,173	,001
		6-10 years	405	3,19	1,246	,062	
		+10 years	234	2,82	1,183	,077	

As for the number of linguistic aspects connected with vocabulary learning, discrepancy arose because less experienced students (0-10) moderately agreed on the fact that learning a FL was essentially learning its vocabulary; the third group of learners (+10), however, maintained a negative attitude towards this statement. Nevertheless, their means were more similar when qualifying English vocabulary as moderately difficult: those with shorter experience were the ones who considered vocabulary difficult to learn.

The last two significantly different statements were connected with how vocabulary should be learnt and assessed. The former, i.e. vocabulary can only be learnt by memorising individual words, was moderately supported by less experienced learners (0-10), whereas those with more than 10 years of experience showed their disconformity with this statement. Finally, all groups agreed to a medium extent on the idea that vocabulary tests should be based on lists of frequent words; the scores of more experienced learners were, however, slightly lower.

◆ **Variation in overall strategy use**

Significant correlations were found between length of prior English learning and four strategy subscales, that is, discovery, vocabulary retrieval, vocabulary use and metacognitive techniques. The only category where this correlation was not observed refers to storage into memory strategies; in fact, this was the least frequently used subtype of VLSs, as shown in Figure 20 and Table 63.

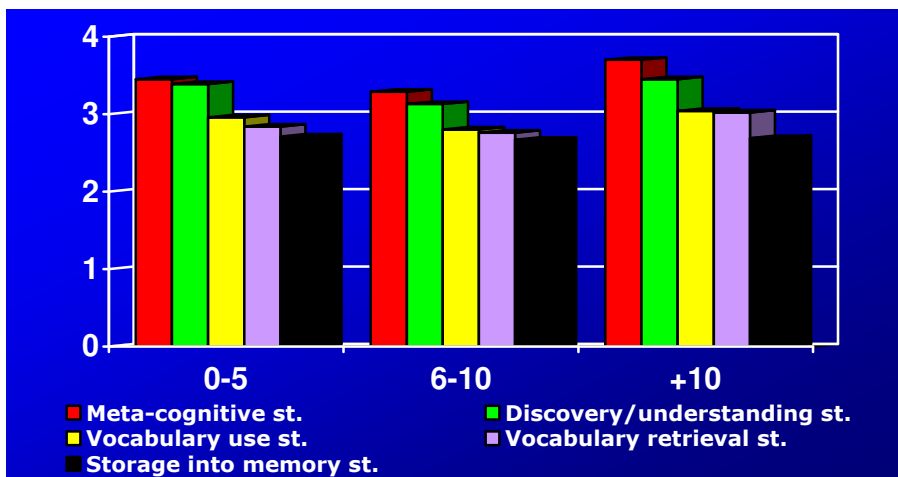


Figure 20: Differences in VLS use according to the period of EFL instruction

Table 63: Differences in the use of VLS categories according to the period of EFL instruction

CATEGORY	SOURCE	N	X	SD	SE	P
Discovery strategies	0-5 years	58	3,38	0,545	0,072	,000
	6-10 years	409	3,25	0,506	0,025	
	+10 years	235	3,42	0,49	0,032	
Storage into memory	0-5 years	58	2,72	0,658	0,086	,877
	6-10 years	408	2,68	0,557	0,028	
	+10 years	235	2,69	0,557	0,036	
Vocabulary retrieval	0-5 years	58	2,84	0,899	0,118	,002
	6-10 years	402	2,76	0,901	0,045	
	+10 years	235	3,02	0,963	0,063	
Vocabulary use	0-5 years	58	2,96	0,834	0,109	,002
	6-10 years	403	2,81	0,874	0,044	
	+10 years	235	3,04	0,747	0,049	
Metacognitive	0-5 years	57	3,46	0,668	0,088	,000
	6-10 years	403	3,28	0,742	0,037	
	+10 years	235	3,70	0,687	0,045	

In general, these results are in accordance with the previous variables since memory strategies were more popular among less experienced learners, while metacognitive skills were much more greatly appreciated by experienced students (+10). Indeed, those with more than ten years of prior English learning reported the highest use of learning strategies, whereas the scores of the remaining two groups were slightly lower. For those who had been learning English between six and ten years, the reported overall use of strategies was lower than for the other subjects.

Moreover, significant divergence of opinions was found among learners when dealing with particular items, as in the case of discovery strategies (Table 64). All participants reported using guessing strategies frequently, especially those who had studied English for more than ten years and the same applies to employing the logical development of the paragraph to guess the meaning of words, where the aforementioned group's high mean contrasts with the moderate figure of the other two groups. Word division into parts to derive meaning was moderately

popular among the least and the most experienced students, whereas it was infrequent among the intermediate group (6-10). Besides, all groups constantly resorted to applying common sense and background knowledge to understand word meaning (once again the mean scores of the most experienced learners were slightly higher) and the same applies to reading sample sentences in a dictionary to understand all the senses of a word. However, those with up to 5 years or more than 10 years of prior English learning claimed to pay attention quite commonly to many word aspects, such as pronunciation, derivatives, etc., whereas the scores for the intermediate group fell within the scope of medium use (M=3.37).

As for the use of monolingual dictionaries, once again the least and the most experienced learners coincide in their means (medium use); this contrasts with a lower use shown by those who had had between 6 and 10 years of EFL learning experience. Finally, as expected, students with less learning experience relied more frequently on teachers' translation or explanations of word meaning, whilst those with more than 10 years of experience were more self-reliant (M= 3.29).

Table 64: Differences in learners' exploitation of meaning discovery/understanding strategies according to the period of EFL instruction

ITEM	DISCOVERY STRATEGIES	SOURCE	N	X	SD	SE	P
41	I guess meaning from context/topic.	0-5 years	58	4,02	,964	,127	,000
		6-10 years	408	3,97	1,074	,053	
		+10 years	234	4,31	,807	,053	
43	I find out the logical development of the paragraph to guess word meaning.	0-5 years	57	3,30	1,336	,177	,010
		6-10 years	405	3,35	1,137	,056	
		+10 years	234	3,62	1,047	,068	
46	I try to find out meaning by dividing the word into chunks.	0-5 years	58	2,83	1,465	,192	,000
		6-10 years	406	2,34	1,343	,067	
		+10 years	234	3,00	1,449	,095	
48	I use common sense and previous knowledge to understand meaning.	0-5 years	58	3,76	1,189	,156	,000
		6-10 years	406	3,80	,997	,049	
		+10 years	234	4,11	,832	,054	
54	I read sample sentences illustrating the different senses of a word.	0-5 years	57	4,04	1,133	,150	,001
		6-10 years	404	3,90	1,218	,061	
		+10 years	233	4,25	,964	,063	
55	I pay attention to many word aspects and not only to word meaning.	0-5 years	57	3,56	1,282	,170	,003
		6-10 years	406	3,37	1,323	,066	
		+10 years	234	3,73	1,205	,079	
56	I make use of monolingual dictionaries.	0-5 years	57	2,67	1,443	,191	,000
		6-10 years	403	2,39	1,481	,074	
		+10 years	234	2,98	1,444	,094	
57	I ask the teacher for an explanation or translation.	0-5 years	58	3,71	1,043	,137	,017
		6-10 years	407	3,51	1,164	,058	
		+10 years	233	3,29	1,214	,080	

Moving on to storage into memory strategies, Table 65 illustrates that all the participants reported grouping words, relating them to a topic or everyday situation (items 63-65) to a medium extent, although average means increased with years of learning experience.

On the other hand, memorising common suffixes and prefixes had a medium acceptance among learners who had studied English up to 5 years, whilst the remaining groups rated it as an unpopular strategy. However, subjects with the greatest amount of instruction claimed that they embedded new words into contexts to better recall them quite frequently (M=3.73), in contrast with the less experienced learners' medium scores.

Table 65: Differences in learners' exploitation of storage into memory strategies according to the period of EFL instruction (Part 1)

ITEM	STORAGE INTO MEMORY STRATEGIES	SOURCE	N	X	SD	SE	P
63	I group words together to remember them.	0-5 years	57	2,84	1,192	,158	,009
		6-10 years	406	3,08	1,277	,063	
		+10 years	235	3,33	1,243	,081	
64	I group words related to the same topic to remember them.	0-5 years	58	2,66	1,236	,162	,011
		6-10 years	403	2,98	1,262	,063	
		+10 years	233	3,18	1,302	,085	
65	I group words related to the same situation to remember them.	0-5 years	58	2,98	1,207	,158	,013
		6-10 years	404	2,90	1,266	,063	
		+10 years	235	3,20	1,308	,085	
67	I analyse word parts and memorise the most commonly used prefixes and suffixes.	0-5 years	57	2,51	1,351	,179	,000
		6-10 years	402	2,08	1,177	,059	
		+10 years	234	2,49	1,233	,081	
73	I learn words better by putting them into contexts.	0-5 years	58	3,43	1,230	,161	,002
		6-10 years	406	3,40	1,137	,056	
		+10 years	234	3,73	1,049	,069	
77	Keyword method.	0-5 years	58	2,34	1,292	,170	,002
		6-10 years	403	2,33	1,290	,064	
		+10 years	234	1,98	1,174	,077	
81	I assess myself with vocabulary tests.	0-5 years	58	2,34	1,163	,153	,010
		6-10 years	399	2,07	1,245	,062	
		+10 years	234	1,85	1,152	,075	
85	I use flashcards.	0-5 years	58	2,38	1,449	,190	,000
		6-10 years	401	2,30	1,413	,071	
		+10 years	235	1,86	1,199	,078	

As for the keyword method, self-administered vocabulary tests and flashcards, they were overall rated as infrequent techniques; however, it could be argued that they were slightly more popular among less experienced learners.

No relevant differences were observed within the category of retrieval strategies and only one item deserves analysis among the strategies employed to make use of already learnt vocabulary. Thus, the intermediate group (6-10) reported a moderate use of techniques that entail reading and practising learnt vocabulary, whereas the remaining groups showed a frequent use of the aforementioned strategies, as shown in the table below:

Table 66: Differences in learners' exploitation of vocabulary use strategies according to the period of EFL instruction

ITEM	STORAGE INTO MEMORY STRATEGIES	SOURCE	N	X	SD	SE	P
90	I read and employ English media to practise words I am already familiar with.	0-5 years	58	3,57	1,244	,163	,000
		6-10 years	401	3,19	1,299	,065	
		+10 years	235	3,86	1,101	,072	

Finally, a common discrepancy was recorded when participants were asked about self-regulatory strategies: whereas less experienced subjects reported a moderate acknowledgement of important words to understand paragraphs, students with more than 10 years of instruction were clearer about them. The same is true for items 96 and 98, i.e. knowing which cues must be applied so as to guess word meaning as well as searching for other materials apart from textbooks to learn new words, where more experienced learners (those with more than 10 years of instruction) outscored the other two groups (those with up to 5 years and between 6 and 10 years of instruction, respectively).

Conversely, these first two groups of subjects (0-10) admitted they focused only on vocabulary taught by the teacher or directly related to exams to a higher extent than students with more of 10 years of instruction (medium versus low scores).

Table 67: Differences in learners' exploitation of metacognitive strategies according to the period of EFL instruction

ITEM	STORAGE INTO MEMORY STRATEGIES	SOURCE	N	X	SD	SE	P
94	I know whether a word is essential for me to understand a text.	0-5 years	57	3,47	1,071	,142	,000
		6-10 years	401	3,36	1,093	,055	
		+10 years	235	3,89	,915	,060	
95	I know whether a word is essential for me to learn.	0-5 years	57	3,51	,966	,128	,000
		6-10 years	398	3,42	1,054	,053	
		+10 years	235	3,76	,953	,062	
96	I know how to use cues to understand meaning.	0-5 years	57	3,14	1,093	,145	,001
		6-10 years	402	3,18	1,110	,055	
		+10 years	235	3,51	1,014	,066	
98	I look for other materials to read apart from textbooks.	0-5 years	57	3,07	1,374	,182	,000
		6-10 years	401	2,62	1,439	,072	
		+10 years	234	3,52	1,327	,087	
99	I only learn vocabulary taught by the teacher.	0-5 years	57	2,72	1,411	,187	,000
		6-10 years	403	2,84	1,397	,070	
		+10 years	235	2,09	1,218	,079	
100	I only focus on vocabulary related to exams.	0-5 years	57	2,63	1,397	,185	,000
		6-10 years	403	2,64	1,383	,069	
		+10 years	235	1,94	1,136	,074	

4.1.2. Results of the VLT

As explained in chapter three where we discussed the method used in this research project, the *Vocabulary Levels Test* (VLT) was administered not to find out about the students' vocabulary stock but to divide them into four groups according to the results obtained, namely, low proficient (those with an amount of vocabulary below 1000 words), lower-intermediate (those with a vocabulary stock of 1000 words), upper-intermediate (those with a vocabulary stock of 2000 words) and finally, high proficient (those with a word stock between 3000 and 5000 words).

Nevertheless, one of the research questions was aimed at clarifying, on the one hand, whether learners with different proficiency levels in vocabulary had the same ideas about vocabulary learning and resorted to the same type of vocabulary strategies and, on the other hand, to draw a comparison between

vocabulary learning outcomes and the other variables considered in this study, that is, age, gender, grade level and amount of English instruction. Both analyses will be presented separately; I will start with the variable analysis, followed by the reported beliefs and vocabulary strategies.

4.1.2.1. General results

Breadth of vocabulary knowledge was measured by the VLT. Four main frequency levels were used: 1000 words, 2000 words, 3000 words, 5000 words (cf. section 3.3.1). This instrument tested only content words, both in comprehension and production. Students had to score at least 83% to pass on to the next level, according to the criteria explained by Paul Nation and Batia Laufer <<http://www.er.uqam.ca/nobel/r21270/levels>>.

Once processed, each frequency level was given a value so as to be more easily compared, i.e. 1=1000, 2=2000, 3=3000 and 4=5000. Thus on a 5-point scale, the mean score obtained by our subjects was 2.23, meaning that the average vocabulary level was of 1000 words, as illustrated in Table 68.

Table 68: Students' VLT performance

BREATH OF VOCABULARY KNOWLEDGE	N	X	SD	SE
	712	2,23	1,236	,046

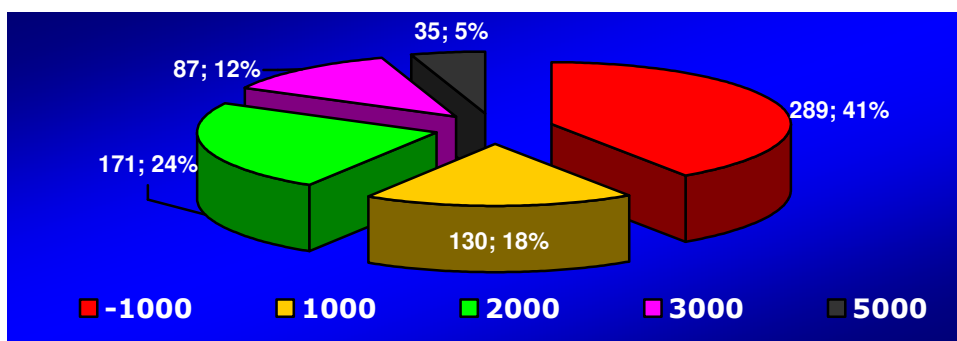


Figure 21: Students' distribution according to VLT performance

Roughly speaking, Figure 21 demonstrates that a great number of subjects (41%) know less than the minimum amount of 1000 words in English, namely ESO and Bacharelato students, what somehow outnumbered our expectations. Over the score of 1000 words, we find those students (18%) with a lower-intermediate proficiency level. Twenty-four per cent of the sample scored 2000 words, whereas 12% and 5% showed the knowledge of 3000 and 5000 words, respectively, which correspond to University and EOI students. Of course, exceptions to these tendencies were found in lower and higher levels.

4.1.2.2. Analysis of test results by variables

Encouraged by the significant differences found in the SVLSQ among subjects and bearing in mind the aforementioned independent variables, I decided to conduct an analysis that correlates learning outcomes (represented by the score obtained in the VLT) and students' background differences: age, gender, grade level and prior English instruction.

◆ **Gender variable:** Gender differences in learning a foreign language are commonly acknowledged in studies of the kind (cf. section 2.2.4.2). As regards the results obtained and once they were processed according to one-way ANOVA statistical test, female participants outperformed men on vocabulary size being this difference really significant ($P < .05$). Indeed, the average mean for male students defined them as low proficient (vocabulary stock of less than 1000 words) whereas female learners were rated as lower-intermediate students (vocabulary size of 1000 words). This can be seen very clearly in Table 69 below:

Table 69: Gender differences in VLT performance

Gender group	N	X	SD	SE	P
Male	265	1,89	1,148	,071	,000
Female	447	2,45	1,245	,059	
Total	712	2,23	1,236	,046	

Figures 22 and 23 illustrate more graphically how female participants outscored the male group. In fact, students knowing less than 1000 words represent only 33% of the total group of women in contrast with 55% of men, that is, more than a half. Then, percentages representing low intermediate learners (1000 words) are quite similar between genders, that is, 16% and 19%, respectively. However, high intermediate and high achievers were more numerous in the case of women and significantly smaller in the case of men, which may confirm that gender should be taken into account as a variable that may exert some influence on overall proficiency ratings.

Figure 22: Male scores on VLT

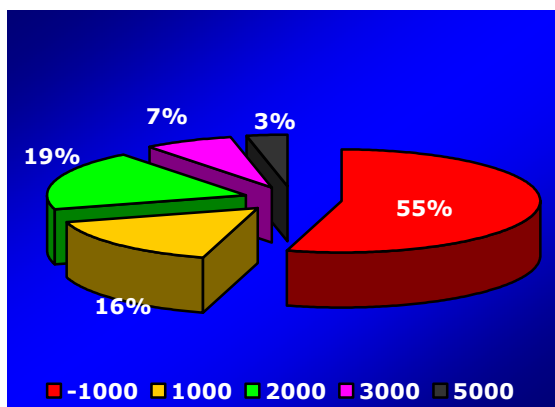
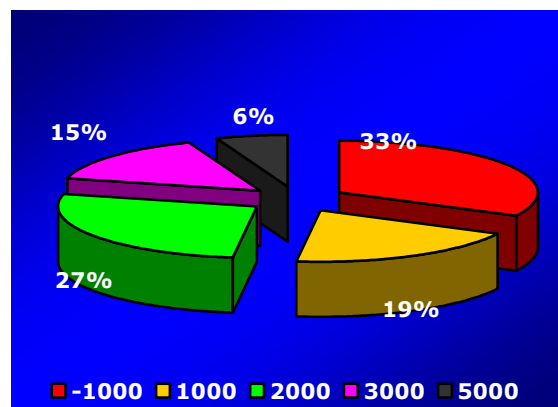


Figure 23: Female scores on VLT



◆ **Age variable:** As regards age divergence in vocabulary breath, relevant differences among subjects of various ages were expected; that is why the variables of age and grade level were considered in the selection of participants.

My prior expectations were confirmed after the processing of the data. In general, older learners mastered a significantly greater stock of vocabulary than their younger counterparts, as reflected in the average means of Table 70.

Table 70: Age differences in VLT performance

Age group	N	X	SD	SE	P
12-14	90	1,00	,000	,000	
15-17	241	1,44	,700	,045	
18-20	74	2,16	1,228	,143	
21-23	123	3,45	,925	,083	,000
24-26	49	3,27	,974	,139	
+26	121	3,06	,859	,078	
Total	698	2,22	1,239	,049	

Bearing in mind the aforementioned results, students whose ages range from 12 to 17 were overall low achievers (less than 1000 words). The group of low intermediate subjects (1000 words) was formed by 18 to 20 year-old pupils. Finally, the upper-intermediate achievers defined the oldest students from 21 to over 26 years old; however, it is worth noticing that their average means decreased with age. As expected, only a few students could be considered high achievers; special attention will be paid to this small group in the discussion of the individual analysis of items.

Apart from that, age groups were rather heterogeneous in their test results, as depicted in Figures 24-28. The only exception to this tendency was found among the youngest group (12-14), their rates corresponded to the profile of a low proficient learner.

Figure 24: 15-17 year-old learners' scores on VLT

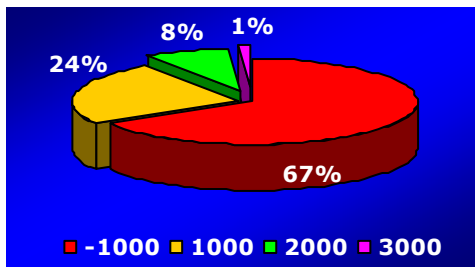


Figure 25: 18-20 year-old learners' scores on VLT

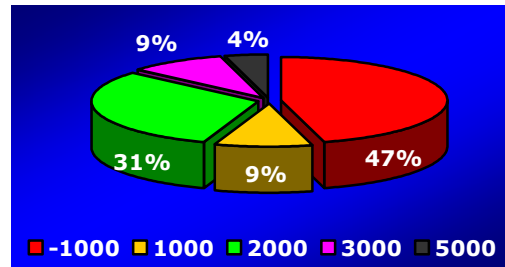


Figure 26: 21-23 year-old learners' scores on VLT

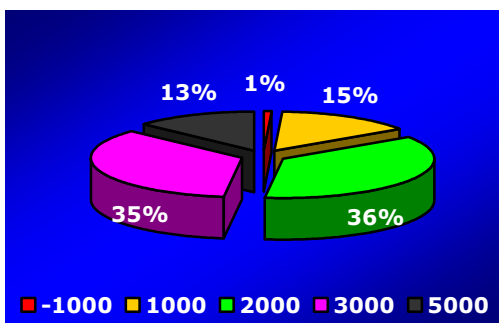


Figure 27: 24-26 year-old learners' scores on VLT

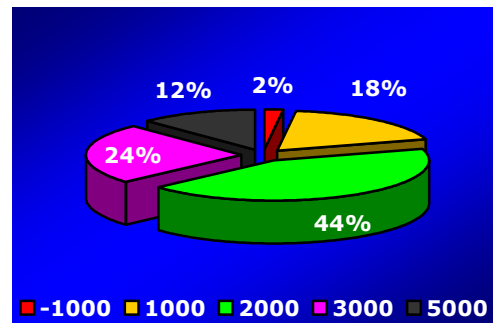
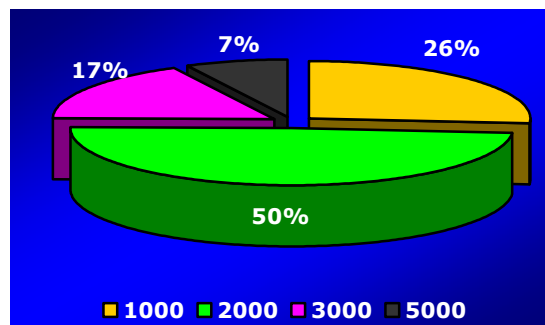


Figure 28: +26 year-old learners' scores on VLT



The vast majority of students belonging to the second group (15-17) also fell within the category of low proficiency. Twenty-four percent of the total was rated as lower-intermediate and 8% as upper-intermediate, whilst only 3 students (1% of the total) could obtain a test level of 3000 words.

Percentages change when dealing with the next age group (18-20), where a polarisation of scores can be observed: they were either low proficient (47%) or

upper-intermediate (31%), depending on their grade level as we will see later on. Besides, this is the first time some subjects scored the highest mark in the VLT, that is, knowledge of 5000 words, but it was rather anecdotal with only four per cent out of the total thirteen per cent of high achievers within this group.

The most dramatic variation is seen in the next age category (21-23). Here, low and lower-intermediate achievers represent only sixteen per cent of the total, thirty-six per cent of them were rated as upper-intermediate whereas high proficiency students (3000-5000 words) concentrate almost half of them (48%), which differs greatly from the previous three age groups. The same tendency is observed in the last two groups, from 24 to over 26 year-old learners, although most of them were concentrated on the category of upper-intermediate, the percentage of high achievers gradually decreased.

◆ **Grade level variable:** Bearing in mind the differences among subjects surveyed when considering the age factor, I expected to confirm them with this variable, since age and grade level correlate, especially in the case of younger students. Thus, once again, significant variations were observed among subjects, which somehow coincided with those obtained across age groups. For example, ESO and BAC students were rated as low achievers (less than 1000 words); however, in the case of BAC scores their means were lower than expected, since I a priori considered them to be intermediate learners.

In addition to this, my expectations were fulfilled with UNI students, the highest achievers, in fact, within the scope of upper-intermediate learners (2000 words). However, the scores obtained by EOI learners are in the border line

between lower and upper-intermediate proficiency, which were also lower than expected (Table 71).

Table 71: Grade differences in VLT performance

Grade level group	N	X	SD	SE	P
1 st -2 nd ESO	73	1,00	,000	,000	
3 rd -4 th ESO	59	1,03	,183	,024	
BAC	219	1,32	,557	,038	
UNI	134	3,66	,851	,073	,000
EOI	194	2,93	,779	,056	
OTH	33	3,15	1,004	,175	
Total	712	2,23	1,236	,046	

Figures 29-33 show the distribution of learners according to different proficiency levels within each grade level group; these results clearly indicate that the age and grade variables strongly correlate. On the one hand, ESO and BAC students concentrated their subjects within the group of low achievers. Indeed, all 1st and 2nd year ESO learners' scores were below 1000 words and only two 3rd-4th subjects scored over this mark, representing 3.4% of the total. A higher number of BAC students were considered lower-intermediate but only 3.2% and 0.5% of them were upper-intermediate and high achievers respectively, which stands for a minimal part of the BAC sample.

Figure 29: 3rd-4th ESO learners' scores on VLT

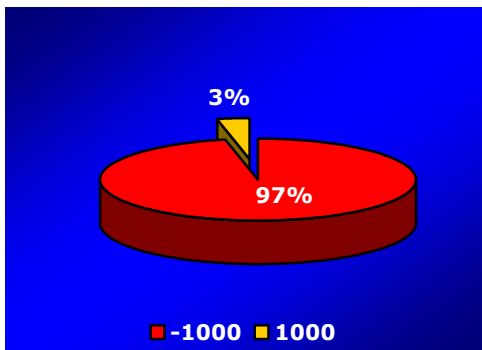


Figure 30: BAC learners' scores on VLT

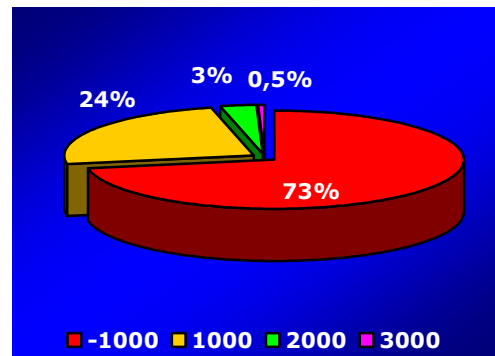


Figure 31: UNI learners' scores on VLT

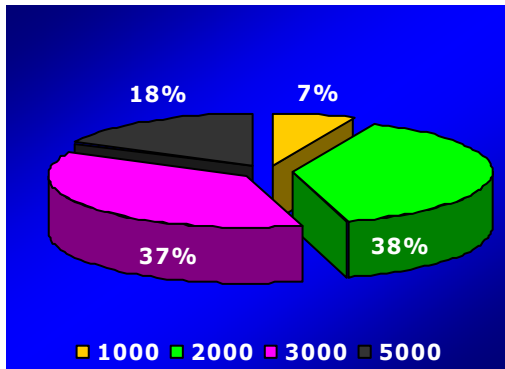


Figure 32: EOI learners' scores on VLT

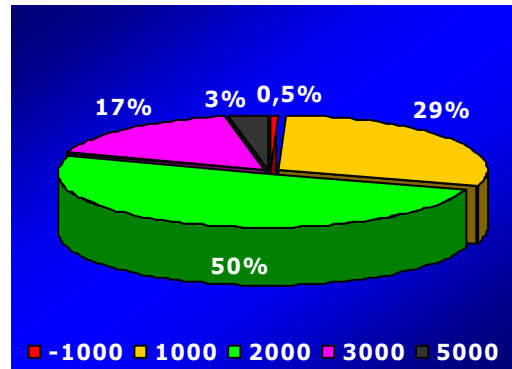
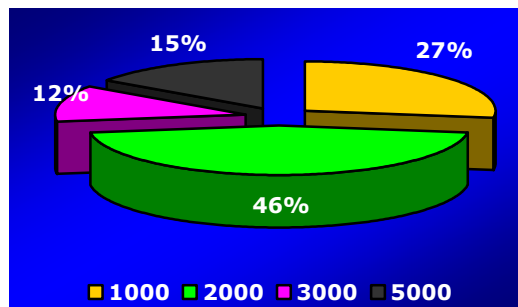


Figure 33: OTH learners' scores on VLT



Quite on the contrary, fifty per cent of UNI students were rated as high achievers (3000-5000 words) whereas most of the remaining subjects were upper-intermediate (2000) and no one obtained a low proficiency mark. EOI and OTH showed a quite similar distribution of their subjects; almost half of both groups

were upper-intermediate achievers and the rest of them either lower-intermediate or high proficient learners.

◆ **Length of English instruction variable:** Finally, it is reasonable to assume that the more years studying EFL, the more proficient one becomes. With this hypothesis in mind, I analysed whether the amount of instruction exerted any influence on students' proficiency scores; as expected, significant differences were also found.

Table 72 illustrates the mean scores obtained by all the three groups. They are, at least, quite curious: the aforementioned hypothesis was confirmed for the group of the most experienced students (+10 years), since the mean score obtained was the highest one, though much lower than expected (they were very close to the border line between lower and upper intermediate).

Table 72: Length of EFL instruction differences in VLT performance

Length of EFL instruction	N	X	SD	SE	P
0-5 YEARS	58	2,14	1,099	,144	,000
6-10 YEARS	410	1,80	1,091	,054	
+10 YEARS	235	2,98	1,151	,075	
Total	703	2,23	1,236	,047	

Nevertheless, the remaining groups do not follow this tendency because the scores obtained by the intermediate group (6-10 years) are lower than those achieved by the group of beginners (0-5 years), in clear contradiction with the previous hypothesis. It is bizarre how students with up to 5 years of instruction fell within the same category of students who have been studying English for more than 10 years (being their scores slightly lower). What is more, it is amazing

to see how more experienced learners (6-10 years) scored significantly lower than the group of beginners, falling within the category of lower achievers. This will have to be closely examined.

Figures 34-36 graphically illustrate the main variations in the distribution of learners with different proficiency levels across groups.

Figure 34: VLT scores of learners with 0-5 years of EFL instruction

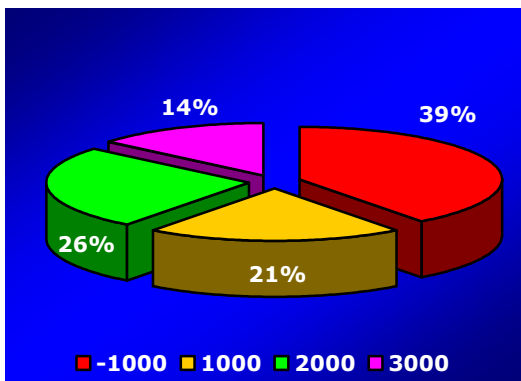


Figure 35: VLT scores of learners with 6-10 years of EFL instruction

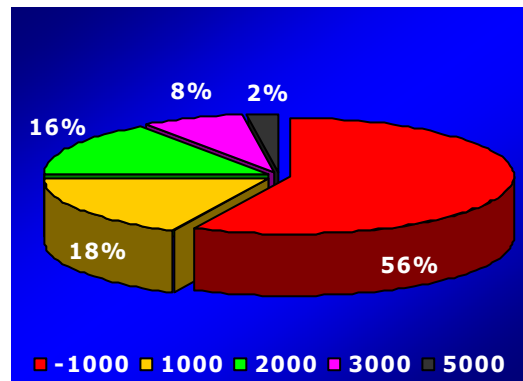
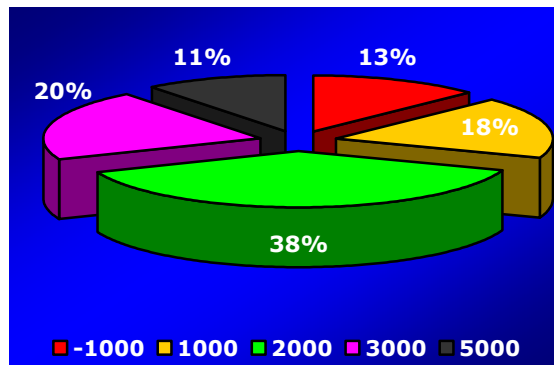


Figure 36: VLT scores of learners with +10 years of EFL instruction



As can be seen, the most divergent group was that of learners who have been studying EFL for more than 10 years, since the majority of their members correspond either to upper-intermediate (38%) or high achievers (31%). In contrast with this, the least experienced learners had a more homogeneous

distribution, though the largest part of learners was rated as low achievers. As for the second group, those whose amount of EFL instruction ranged from 6 to 10 years, it is curious to see how the vast majority of them were low achievers (56%), followed by 34% of intermediate learners and only 10% of high achievers, much lower than expected, considering the number of years they have spent learning English vocabulary.

4.1.2.3. Reported beliefs and VLS according to VLT scores

The last part of this section deals with the relationship between the subjects' proficiency level and their reported beliefs about vocabulary and strategy use. As before (cf. section 4.1.1.4.), significant variation in ideas about vocabulary and strategy use across the five subscales of discovery, storage into memory, retrieval, use and metacognitive techniques was determined by using the one-way ANOVA statistical test.

◆ Beliefs about vocabulary learning

The aim of this analysis was to check whether students showing different levels of proficiency had the same ideas about vocabulary or not. The answer to this question was quite clear since significant differences were found in 20 of the total number of 34 items concerning this issue.

Table 73 contains motivational aspects of vocabulary learning that were found as significantly different across subjects. The attractive nature of both the task and the vocabulary involved seemed to be important for the learning process because the more successful the learner, the more willing to accomplish these tasks (items 7 and 8). Conversely, lower achievers reported only a medium

predilection for vocabulary. Likewise, the most proficient learners consider vocabulary a useful tool both to understand things they like or to communicate with foreign people, whereas less proficient ones view this instrumental side of language in more moderate terms.

Table 73: Differences in beliefs about vocabulary learning according to VLT scores (Part 1)

ITEM	BELIEF STATEMENT	SOURCE	N	X	SD	SE	P
7	I Like learning vocabulary.	-1000	288	3,24	1,158	,068	,000
		1000	130	3,90	1,033	,091	
		2000	171	4,29	,817	,062	
		3000	87	4,37	,794	,085	
		5000	35	4,51	,612	,103	
8	I like using vocabulary.	-1000	288	3,14	1,304	,077	,000
		1000	129	3,67	1,154	,102	
		2000	170	4,16	,946	,073	
		3000	86	4,26	,814	,088	
		5000	35	4,54	,657	,111	
10	It is useful to understand things.	-1000	288	3,01	1,330	,078	,000
		1000	129	3,45	1,199	,106	
		2000	170	3,67	1,048	,080	
		3000	86	3,60	1,044	,113	
		5000	35	3,86	1,061	,179	
11	It is useful to communicate.	-1000	286	3,12	1,396	,083	,000
		1000	128	3,78	1,279	,113	
		2000	169	3,91	1,057	,081	
		3000	86	4,09	,990	,107	
		5000	35	3,94	1,162	,196	
12	I am good at learning vocabulary.	-1000	288	2,78	1,186	,070	,000
		1000	128	3,13	1,045	,092	
		2000	170	3,34	,878	,067	
		3000	86	3,60	,949	,102	
		5000	35	3,83	,857	,145	
13	I feel that I do not master enough vocabulary.	-1000	285	2,47	1,197	,071	,000
		1000	129	2,95	1,014	,089	
		2000	171	3,02	,945	,072	
		3000	87	3,15	,934	,100	
		5000	35	3,49	1,011	,171	
14	I get anxious when trying to speak.	-1000	286	3,50	1,404	,083	,000
		1000	129	3,32	1,146	,101	
		2000	171	3,12	1,212	,093	
		3000	86	2,93	1,176	,127	
		5000	35	2,51	1,292	,218	
15	I give up if it is too difficult.	-1000	284	2,49	1,367	,081	,001
		1000	128	2,14	1,114	,098	
		2000	170	2,19	1,125	,086	
		3000	86	2,13	1,027	,111	
		5000	34	1,79	,808	,139	

Moreover, students' self-perception at learning vocabulary was better as the proficiency level increased. Thus, lower achievers had the poorest image of themselves as vocabulary learners, whilst high achievers were much more

optimistic. The same applies to their satisfaction with the amount of vocabulary mastered: all groups were moderately happy with their vocabulary stocks (even high proficient learners), except for low achievers, who showed a clear dissatisfaction with their vocabulary breadth.

Finally, when trying to communicate, anxiety was a real drawback among students rated with the lowest proficiency, whereas as proficiency increased, anxiety diminished. Furthermore, all students claimed not to quit studying vocabulary even if it was too difficult, although the increase of scores from most to least proficient learners was quite relevant (item 15).

As for the number of linguistic aspects connected with vocabulary learning (Table 74), everyone agreed that the vocabulary of a particular community reflects its own culture but the scores obtained for lower achievers were slightly inferior to those of their counterparts.

Nevertheless, in item 19, there was a great variation between lower and lower-intermediate achievers (-1000 to 1000 words) and upper-intermediate and high achievers (2000 to 5000 words): the latter were clearly in disagreement with the statement that learning a FL is essentially learning its vocabulary, whereas the former did not keep such a negative attitude. Moreover, all participants rated English vocabulary as moderately difficult to learn, except for the group of high achievers; for this particular group, vocabulary seemed to be an easy task, according to their average means.

Table 74: Differences in beliefs about vocabulary learning according to VLT scores (Part 2)

ITEM	BELIEF STATEMENT	SOURCE	N	X	SD	SE	P
18	The culture of a community is reflected in its vocabulary.	-1000	279	3,59	1,162	,070	,000
		1000	129	3,98	,964	,085	
		2000	171	3,91	1,053	,081	
		3000	86	4,26	,829	,089	
		5000	35	4,11	1,022	,173	
19	Learning a FL is essentially learning its vocabulary.	-1000	285	3,11	1,279	,076	,000
		1000	129	2,54	1,046	,092	
		2000	171	2,39	1,025	,078	
		3000	87	2,14	1,058	,113	
		5000	35	2,26	1,146	,194	
21	English vocabulary is difficult to learn.	-1000	289	3,16	1,136	,067	,000
		1000	130	2,75	1,064	,093	
		2000	171	2,64	,981	,075	
		3000	87	2,29	,951	,102	
		5000	35	2,26	1,067	,180	
26	Guessing word meaning in context is the best way to learn vocabulary.	-1000	283	3,32	1,277	,076	,006
		1000	128	3,75	1,065	,094	
		2000	170	3,52	1,027	,079	
		3000	85	3,65	1,020	,111	
		5000	35	3,54	1,010	,171	
27	One can only learn vocabulary by memorising individual words.	-1000	288	3,14	1,329	,078	,000
		1000	128	2,49	1,057	,093	
		2000	171	2,21	1,024	,078	
		3000	87	2,02	,940	,101	
		5000	35	2,14	,845	,143	
29	Using vocabulary is more important than memorising words.	-1000	288	4,40	,924	,054	,000
		1000	129	4,71	,627	,055	
		2000	171	4,64	,639	,049	
		3000	87	4,72	,564	,060	
		5000	35	4,69	,530	,090	

When asked about how vocabulary is learnt (Table 75), there were some points where divergence arose among students. First, all groups acknowledged the importance of guessing word meaning in context as a good way of learning vocabulary, in opposition to lower achievers' less determined opinion (M=3.32). However, all groups discarded memorising individual lexical items as the only procedure to acquire vocabulary, except for lower achievers, who were not so critical about memorisation (M=3.14). Finally, everyone agreed on the fact that making use of words is better than memorising individual words, but learners with a vocabulary stock below 1000 words showed slightly lower values.

Relevant differences were observed among subjects concerning their opinions about the teaching and assessment of vocabulary. All groups claimed that

students should go beyond knowing the translation of the foreign word, but also its meaning, form and basic use. However, their means increased with their proficiency and the same applies to the claim that teaching words out of context should be completed with in-context teaching. Besides, all of them supported a clear and systematic way to teach vocabulary; on this occasion, the highest scores corresponded once again to high achievers (M=4.09).

Furthermore, word lists were clearly supported by low achievers (M=3.60), whereas the remaining groups considered them valid only to a medium extent. The same could be observed in item 39, where low achievers claimed that vocabulary tests should be based on lists of frequent words (M=3.53). The rest of the participants showed a more moderate support of this type of tests; this was not the case of high achievers with a vocabulary stock of 5000 words, who showed their disagreement on this idea.

Table 75: Differences in beliefs about vocabulary learning according to VLT scores (Part 3)

ITEM	BELIEF STATEMENT	SOURCE	N	X	SD	SE	P
30	The least a learner should know about a word is form, meaning and basic use, not only its translation.	-1000	285	3,81	1,115	,066	,000
		1000	129	4,05	,951	,084	
		2000	171	4,06	,906	,069	
		3000	87	4,34	,860	,092	
		5000	35	4,60	,695	,117	
31	Vocabulary must be taught in a systematic and clear way.	-1000	287	4,04	1,072	,063	,001
		1000	129	3,80	1,011	,089	
		2000	168	3,70	,988	,076	
		3000	86	3,65	,955	,103	
		5000	35	4,09	,887	,150	
34	Out-of-context teaching should be completed with in-context one.	-1000	280	3,64	1,038	,062	,000
		1000	128	3,86	,911	,081	
		2000	170	4,08	,817	,063	
		3000	85	4,09	,750	,081	
		5000	34	4,29	,760	,130	
35	Teachers should make word lists.	-1000	287	3,60	1,321	,078	,000
		1000	127	3,09	1,231	,109	
		2000	169	3,09	1,122	,086	
		3000	86	3,08	1,190	,128	
		5000	34	3,06	1,229	,211	
39	Vocabulary tests must be based on lists of the most frequently used words.	-1000	284	3,53	1,222	,073	,000
		1000	129	2,76	1,230	,108	
		2000	171	2,91	1,111	,085	
		3000	86	2,51	1,049	,113	
		5000	35	2,40	1,117	,189	

As can be gathered from all this, learners with different proficiency levels also held different opinions about some aspects of vocabulary. Thus, it could be argued that attitude towards vocabulary learning exerts an influence upon learning outcomes; this will be discussed later on in further detail.

◆ **Variation in overall strategy use**

As previously stated, one-way ANOVA revealed significant differences in overall strategy use between the four levels of proficiency, as shown in Figure 37 and Table 76.

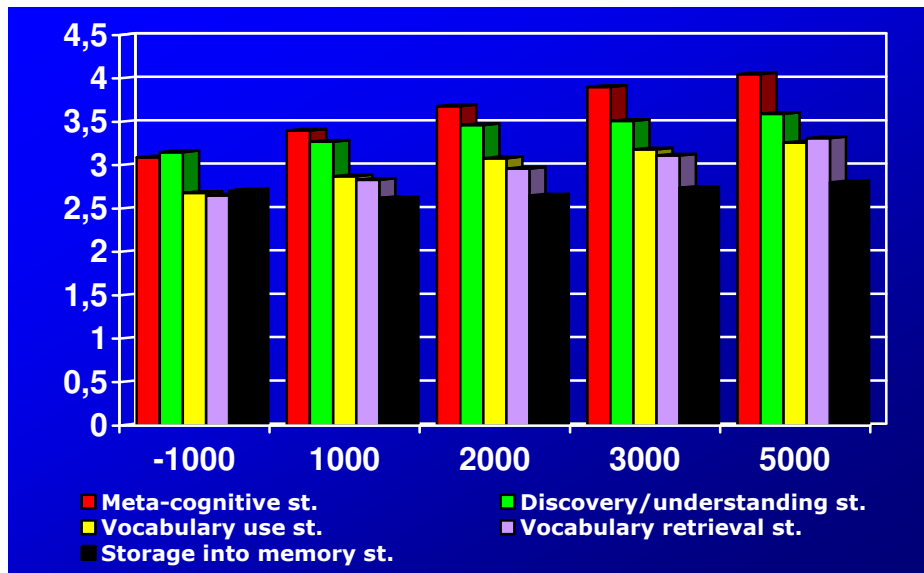


Figure 37: Differences in VLS use according to VLT scores

Table 76: Differences in the use of VLS categories according to VLT scores

CATEGORY	SOURCE	N	X	SD	SE	P
Discovery strategies	-1000	288	3,15	0,526	0,031	,000
	1000	130	3,27	0,519	0,045	
	2000	171	3,46	0,407	0,031	
	3000	87	3,51	0,468	0,05	
	5000	35	3,59	0,385	0,065	
Storage into memory	-1000	287	2,71	0,634	0,037	,228
	1000	130	2,62	0,511	0,045	
	2000	171	2,65	0,541	0,041	
	3000	87	2,74	0,446	0,048	
	5000	35	2,8	0,457	0,077	
Vocabulary retrieval	-1000	281	2,65	0,901	0,054	,000
	1000	130	2,84	0,893	0,078	
	2000	171	2,96	0,88	0,067	
	3000	87	3,11	0,975	0,105	
	5000	35	3,31	0,977	0,165	
Vocabulary use	-1000	282	2,68	0,889	0,053	,000
	1000	130	2,88	0,811	0,071	
	2000	171	3,08	0,739	0,057	
	3000	87	3,18	0,698	0,075	
	5000	35	3,26	0,732	0,124	
Metacognitive	-1000	282	3,1	0,72	0,043	,000
	1000	129	3,41	0,702	0,062	
	2000	171	3,68	0,586	0,045	
	3000	87	3,89	0,596	0,064	
	5000	35	4,05	0,599	0,101	

Relevant variation was observed in four of the five subscales, namely, discovery, vocabulary retrieval, vocabulary use and metacognitive strategies. Moreover, all groups reported employing techniques to retrieve lexical items from memory and using already learnt words to a medium extent; however, as students' level of proficiency increased, they tended to develop these skills much more frequently. The scores gathered in discovery strategies show a clear divergence between lower and higher achievers, ranging from a moderate use of these techniques to a frequent one. The same applies to metacognitive strategies since students with a vocabulary stock over 2000 admitted a constant involvement in their own learning process, in clear contrast with a more moderate participation of both low and lower-intermediate achievers. Conversely, storage into memory strategies seemed to be more homogeneously employed by all participants.

Chapter 4: Results

The number of differences identified between groups according to the test level was very high as table 77 illustrates. It shows the patterns of responses for both guessing meaning and word analysis to understand meaning (items 41-50). These will be analysed separately.

Table 77: Differences in learners' exploitation of meaning discovery/understanding strategies according to VLT scores (Part 1)

ITEM	DISCOVERY STRATEGIES	SOURCE	N	X	SD	SE	P
41	I guess meaning from context/topic.	-1000	287	3,77	1,144	,068	,000
		1000	129	4,22	,912	,080	
		2000	171	4,37	,719	,055	
		3000	87	4,28	,845	,091	
		5000	35	4,37	,690	,117	
42	I look for examples in context to guess word meaning.	-1000	287	3,44	1,138	,067	,000
		1000	128	3,82	1,068	,094	
		2000	170	3,99	,843	,065	
		3000	85	3,92	1,003	,109	
		5000	35	4,11	,676	,114	
43	I find out the logical development of the paragraph to guess word meaning.	-1000	286	3,10	1,170	,069	,000
		1000	129	3,50	1,083	,095	
		2000	170	3,69	1,055	,081	
		3000	86	3,79	,959	,103	
		5000	34	3,79	,978	,168	
44	I look for definitions, paraphrases to support my guesses.	-1000	286	3,33	1,168	,069	,000
		1000	128	3,66	1,083	,096	
		2000	171	3,76	1,038	,079	
		3000	87	3,87	,986	,106	
		5000	35	4,20	,719	,122	
45	I check my hypothesis in context.	-1000	286	3,35	1,312	,078	,002
		1000	128	3,72	1,261	,111	
		2000	170	3,64	1,145	,088	
		3000	85	3,71	1,100	,119	
		5000	35	3,97	,985	,166	
46	I try to find out meaning by dividing word into chunks.	-1000	285	2,05	1,259	,075	,000
		1000	129	2,50	1,409	,124	
		2000	171	3,10	1,336	,102	
		3000	87	3,24	1,446	,155	
		5000	35	3,43	1,195	,202	
47	I derive hypotheses by applying general rules.	-1000	284	2,63	1,210	,072	,000
		1000	128	2,90	1,260	,111	
		2000	171	3,08	1,215	,093	
		3000	87	3,43	1,168	,125	
		5000	35	3,77	,877	,148	
48	I use common sense and previous knowledge to understand meaning.	-1000	285	3,56	1,075	,064	,000
		1000	128	4,01	,909	,080	
		2000	171	4,06	,783	,060	
		3000	87	4,33	,726	,078	
		5000	35	4,49	,562	,095	
49	I understand word meaning by comparing word parts (sounds, roots...) to my native language.	-1000	284	2,43	1,312	,078	,002
		1000	128	2,38	1,242	,110	
		2000	171	2,64	1,196	,091	
		3000	87	2,82	1,290	,138	
		5000	35	3,14	1,141	,193	
50	I understand word meaning by translating it into my native language.	-1000	284	3,70	1,221	,072	,000
		1000	128	3,28	1,255	,111	
		2000	171	3,22	1,152	,088	
		3000	86	3,23	1,103	,119	
		5000	35	3,09	1,095	,185	

Here, it is curious to notice how all statements of these subscales were significantly different across subjects. What is more, a quite regular pattern was revealed: the higher the score, the more frequent the use of VLSs; item 50, devoted to word translation into L1, being the only exception.

Indeed, all groups reported a frequent use of different aspects of context to guess word meaning (items 41-45); means increased gradually along the proficiency levels. The only exception was the group of low achievers, reporting 'medium' guessing strategy use. The same applies to word division into chunks to guess meaning. Bearing in mind that all mean scores went down to the category of medium use, the only group of students who reported a scarce use of this strategy was that of the lower achievers ($M=2.05$).

As for the techniques that entailed word analysis to understand meaning, all learners claimed they applied common sense and previous knowledge to do so (once again, means increased with proficiency). However, only those with a vocabulary breadth of 5000 words admitted they normally applied general rules to derive hypotheses about word meaning; the rest of the groups, however, did so only to a medium extent, their means increasing with proficiency. Then, upper-intermediate and high achievers stated they compared word elements (sounds, prefixes...) to their mother tongue to understand word meaning to a medium extent, whilst low and lower-intermediate groups were more reluctant to do so (all means below 2.5).

The only technique which was more widely appreciated by low proficient learners was that of translating new words into their mother tongue to

understand meaning. In fact, average means worked the other way round: the less proficient the learner, the more frequent the use of translation.

Moving on to dictionary strategies, there was a general agreement on the value of both looking up words in a dictionary to confirm hypotheses about the meaning of words and on reading the sample sentences that illustrate their meaning; however, lower scores were observed among lower achievers. On the contrary, upper-intermediate and high proficient students usually paid attention to word aspects other than translation (sound, derivatives, collocations...); less proficient students, however, did it more moderately. The same could be argued about the use of monolingual dictionaries, employed to a medium extent by the former, namely, advanced learners and quite infrequently by the latter, that is, beginners and intermediate students.

Apart from this, as expected, there was a greater reliance on the teacher to provide an explanation or a translation of the meaning of the word among low and lower-intermediate than among their more proficient counterparts (frequent against medium scores). However, there was more homogeneity of responses when students were asked whether they resorted to their classmates whenever they had problems with the meaning of words. On this occasion, all groups claimed they relied on their peers to a moderate extent, although slightly lower scores were obtained for high achievers.

Table 78: Differences in learners' exploitation of meaning discovery/understanding strategies according to VLT scores (Part 2)

ITEM	DISCOVERY STRATEGIES	SOURCE	N	X	SD	SE	P
52	I look up words in a dictionary to confirm the guessed meaning.	-1000	286	3,74	1,217	,072	,001
		1000	129	3,99	1,027	,090	
		2000	170	4,15	,952	,073	
		3000	87	3,97	1,005	,108	
		5000	35	4,23	,808	,136	
54	I read sample sentences illustrating the different senses of a word.	-1000	283	3,72	1,261	,075	,000
		1000	127	4,04	1,094	,097	
		2000	170	4,29	,965	,074	
		3000	87	4,31	,992	,106	
		5000	35	4,43	,698	,118	
55	I pay attention to many word aspects, not only meaning.	-1000	286	3,04	1,331	,079	,000
		1000	128	3,46	1,235	,109	
		2000	171	3,95	1,116	,085	
		3000	86	4,01	1,046	,113	
		5000	35	4,03	1,071	,181	
56	I make use of monolingual dictionaries.	-1000	281	2,31	1,498	,089	,000
		1000	129	2,22	1,352	,119	
		2000	171	2,93	1,437	,110	
		3000	87	3,23	1,395	,150	
		5000	35	3,37	1,352	,229	
57	I ask the teacher for an explanation or translation.	-1000	286	3,65	1,165	,069	,000
		1000	129	3,61	1,056	,093	
		2000	170	3,26	1,238	,095	
		3000	87	3,13	1,119	,120	
		5000	35	2,86	1,141	,193	
59	I ask my classmates for word meaning.	-1000	287	3,37	1,219	,072	,007
		1000	128	3,05	1,254	,111	
		2000	169	3,21	1,156	,089	
		3000	87	3,11	1,176	,126	
		5000	35	2,71	1,045	,177	

Despite the fact that the overall use of storage into memory strategies was not significantly different among participants, there were some items which presented significant divergences from a statistical perspective. Table 79 shows these differences.

Chapter 4: Results

Table 79: Differences in learners' exploitation of storage into memory strategies according to VLT scores (Part 1)

ITEM	STORAGE INTO MEMORY STRATEGIES	SOURCE	N	X	SD	SE	P
61	I repeat words aloud to memorise them.	-1000	285	3,24	1,396	,083	,001
		1000	129	2,80	1,313	,116	
		2000	171	2,75	1,228	,094	
		3000	87	2,83	1,231	,132	
		5000	35	3,11	1,367	,231	
63	I group words together to remember them.	-1000	285	2,95	1,322	,078	,001
		1000	129	3,23	1,202	,106	
		2000	171	3,16	1,219	,093	
		3000	86	3,41	1,110	,120	
		5000	35	3,74	1,268	,214	
64	I group words related to the same topic to remember them.	-1000	281	2,90	1,293	,077	,011
		1000	129	3,05	1,246	,110	
		2000	171	3,04	1,255	,096	
		3000	87	3,09	1,291	,138	
		5000	35	3,71	1,126	,190	
65	I group words related to the same situation to remember them.	-1000	284	2,74	1,298	,077	,000
		1000	129	3,02	1,293	,114	
		2000	170	3,18	1,218	,093	
		3000	87	3,26	1,176	,126	
		5000	35	3,74	1,067	,180	
67	I analyse word parts and memorise the most commonly used prefixes and suffixes.	-1000	283	1,95	1,215	,072	,000
		1000	128	2,20	1,125	,099	
		2000	170	2,54	1,182	,091	
		3000	86	2,55	1,224	,132	
		5000	35	2,83	1,200	,203	
68	I pay attention to collocations to remember them as fixed expressions.	-1000	283	2,76	1,209	,072	,000
		1000	129	2,61	1,120	,099	
		2000	168	3,01	1,148	,089	
		3000	87	3,26	1,115	,120	
		5000	35	3,49	1,067	,180	
69	I create semantic networks and meaningful groups of words.	-1000	281	2,54	1,195	,071	,000
		1000	129	2,70	1,087	,096	
		2000	170	2,81	1,198	,092	
		3000	87	3,07	1,076	,115	
		5000	35	3,34	1,083	,183	
70	I search for synonyms or antonyms in memory.	-1000	282	2,93	1,291	,077	,000
		1000	129	3,06	1,102	,097	
		2000	171	3,33	1,084	,083	
		3000	87	3,40	1,115	,120	
		5000	35	3,63	,942	,159	
71	I create a sentence in my own language so as to link new and known words.	-1000	284	2,82	1,293	,077	,000
		1000	127	2,39	1,155	,102	
		2000	171	2,47	1,170	,089	
		3000	87	2,32	,958	,103	
		5000	35	2,37	1,190	,201	
72	I remember the sentence in which a word was embedded.	-1000	284	2,80	1,256	,075	,000
		1000	128	2,68	1,122	,099	
		2000	171	3,18	1,180	,090	
		3000	87	3,17	1,193	,128	
		5000	35	3,20	1,183	,200	
73	I learn words better by putting them into different contexts.	-1000	285	3,11	1,185	,070	,000
		1000	130	3,51	1,029	,090	
		2000	170	3,89	,970	,074	
		3000	87	3,95	,951	,102	
		5000	35	4,00	,767	,130	

The average means of all groups were quite similar regarding the use of oral word repetition to memorise vocabulary within the scope of medium use; this was especially so in the case of low and high achievers (5000 words).

As for the creation of mental linkages to remember words, the same pattern can be observed in items 63, 64, 65 and 70: all groups fell within the category of medium use, with a proportional increase of means along the proficiency level, except for high achievers (5000 words), whose means are considerably higher; in this case, the results obtained reached the category of frequent use. This pattern suggests that learners with high proficiency in English are more reliant than less proficient learners on grouping words, either related to a particular topic or situation, and also on looking for synonyms/antonyms to make connections across new words.

The same applies to items 68, 69 and 72, namely, remembering collocations as fixed expressions, creating semantic networks in mind and remembering the sentences where words were embedded, which were generally rated as moderately used; the results also indicate that the more proficient the learners, the more frequently employed. The case of embedding new words into contexts to learn them better is even clearer: whilst low learners' scores rated them as medium users, the average means for the rest of subjects were progressively much higher. Finally, learners with up to 1000 words did not memorise common suffixes or prefixes, whereas the remaining groups did so moderately.

The only item where low achievers outscored the rest of students was that of resorting to their mother tongue so as to create a sentence with the new learnt word to recall it better, quite unpopular among intermediate and high achievers.

As for the rest of storage into memory strategies, Table 80 illustrates that the least proficient learners were more prone than other students to making use of the keyword method or flashcards (items 77 and 85) and also to employing strategies that entail actions, such as the Total Physical Response technique or acting out new words to remember them (items 82 and 83); however, the scores obtained for these items were not so distinctive as the previous ones.

Table 80: Differences in learners' exploitation of storage into memory strategies according to VLT scores (Part 2)

ITEM	STORAGE INTO MEMORY STRATEGIES	SOURCE	N	X	SD	SE	P
77	Keyword method.	-1000	283	2,58	1,309	,078	,000
		1000	128	2,18	1,360	,120	
		2000	170	1,85	1,091	,084	
		3000	87	1,82	,909	,097	
		5000	35	1,97	1,200	,203	
78	I associate the new word to a known English word that sounds similar.	-1000	281	2,94	1,266	,076	,000
		1000	130	2,69	1,441	,126	
		2000	170	2,40	1,174	,090	
		3000	87	2,59	1,157	,124	
		5000	35	2,29	1,126	,190	
82	Total Physical Response.	-1000	279	1,81	1,135	,068	,000
		1000	130	1,31	,669	,059	
		2000	170	1,34	,762	,058	
		3000	86	1,47	,864	,093	
		5000	35	1,31	,631	,107	
83	I physically act out the meaning of new words.	-1000	280	2,16	1,142	,068	,000
		1000	130	1,75	1,148	,101	
		2000	170	1,63	,960	,074	
		3000	86	1,79	1,118	,121	
		5000	35	1,63	1,087	,184	
85	I use flashcards.	-1000	281	2,53	1,409	,084	,000
		1000	130	2,09	1,372	,120	
		2000	170	1,86	1,268	,097	
		3000	87	1,87	1,199	,129	
		5000	35	1,40	,812	,137	
86	I take notes on unfamiliar words.	-1000	280	3,81	1,210	,072	,000
		1000	129	4,24	1,029	,091	
		2000	171	4,21	,977	,075	
		3000	87	4,24	,849	,091	
		5000	35	4,26	,886	,150	

Besides, most students reported associating a new word with an already known form on a sound basis to a medium extent, except for upper-intermediate and high achievers (5000 words), for whom this was an unpopular technique. Finally, note taking was a very frequent strategy among all our subjects but low proficient learners' means were slightly lower than the remaining groups (item 86).

Strategies aimed at retrieving words from memory and using these words were also a source of variation. As shown in Table 81, the former group of strategies were moderately used by all subjects to retrieve words either in situational or in collocations sets although the more proficient the learner, the more frequently used.

Table 81: Differences in learners' exploitation of vocabulary retrieval strategies according to VLT scores

ITEM	VOCABULARY RETRIEVAL	SOURCE	N	X	SD	SE	P
87	I make use of learnt words in situational sets to retrieve them from memory.	-1000	280	2,66	1,152	,069	,000
		1000	129	2,95	1,198	,105	
		2000	171	3,12	1,051	,080	
		3000	87	3,23	1,188	,127	
		5000	35	3,43	1,065	,180	
89	I make use of learnt words in collocational sets to retrieve them from memory.	-1000	280	2,67	1,145	,068	,000
		1000	129	2,75	1,153	,101	
		2000	171	3,02	1,130	,086	
		3000	87	3,21	1,091	,117	
		5000	35	3,49	1,040	,176	

The second group of strategies, that is, the techniques to make use of already learnt vocabulary, showed a clear discrepancy among the most and least proficient students.

Table 82: Differences in learners' exploitation of vocabulary use strategies according to VLT scores

ITEM	VOCABULARY USE	SOURCE	N	X	SD	SE	P
90	I read and employ English media to practice words I am already familiar with.	-1000	280	2,84	1,253	,075	,000
		1000	130	3,49	1,234	,108	
		2000	171	3,91	1,030	,079	
		3000	87	4,13	,950	,102	
		5000	35	4,40	,812	,137	
92	I use known vocabulary in speech and writing.	-1000	280	2,76	1,162	,069	,000
		1000	129	3,14	1,178	,104	
		2000	171	3,38	1,144	,087	
		3000	86	3,44	1,113	,120	
		5000	33	3,70	,951	,166	

Thus, upper-intermediate and high achievers normally resorted to English media and technology to employ known vocabulary; in contrast, lower-intermediate and low achievers reported doing this more moderately. Moreover, all the students claimed to use known words in speech and writing to a medium extent but there was a significant increase in frequency among the 5000-word pupils (M=3.70).

Finally, metacognitive strategies revealed a pattern of responses that shows a great difference between low and high achievers. When asked about what to learn, most students stated they were capable of identifying those words that were relevant to understand a passage or to learn. Again, the same tendency described in the previous groups of strategies was observed: there was a stair-step sequence across the groups of proficiency. Table 83 indicates how increases in the reported "high" use of the strategy at higher levels were in contradiction with the scores obtained by low and even lower-intermediate students (items 94 and 95). What is more, only high achievers reported being sure of how to use context cues to guess meaning, whereas the responses of low and intermediate subjects were less determined.

Four other items (98, 99, 100 and 1001) were also classed as significantly different. Item 98 (*I look for other materials to read besides the textbook*) is particularly interesting: low achievers normally restricted themselves to the textbook, lower-intermediate learners sought other materials to a medium extent and finally, upper-intermediate and high achievers normally read different materials of their interest to learn new lexicon. Besides, they all reported using all means available to understand a word (item 101); however, low proficient learners' means were slightly lower.

Table 83: Differences in learners' exploitation of metacognitive strategies according to VLT scores

ITEM	METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES	SOURCE	N	X	SD	SE	P
94	I know whether a word is essential for me to understand a text.	-1000	280	3,16	1,154	,069	,000
		1000	129	3,50	,993	,087	
		2000	171	3,83	,833	,064	
		3000	87	4,06	,826	,089	
		5000	35	4,26	,657	,111	
95	I know whether a word is essential for me to learn.	-1000	277	3,30	1,145	,069	,000
		1000	128	3,46	,886	,078	
		2000	171	3,77	,890	,068	
		3000	87	3,86	,891	,096	
		5000	35	3,97	,785	,133	
96	I know how to use clues to understand meaning.	-1000	282	3,05	1,173	,070	,000
		1000	128	3,20	1,080	,095	
		2000	170	3,42	,959	,074	
		3000	87	3,71	,820	,088	
		5000	35	3,91	,951	,161	
98	I look for other materials to read besides textbooks.	-1000	281	2,15	1,276	,076	,000
		1000	127	2,87	1,399	,124	
		2000	171	3,51	1,160	,089	
		3000	87	4,13	1,108	,119	
		5000	35	4,31	,832	,141	
99	I only learn vocabulary taught by the teacher.	-1000	282	3,38	1,361	,081	,000
		1000	129	2,34	1,222	,108	
		2000	171	1,93	,968	,074	
		3000	87	1,93	1,169	,125	
		5000	35	1,54	,741	,125	
100	I only focus on vocabulary related to exams.	-1000	282	3,13	1,351	,080	,000
		1000	129	2,19	1,238	,109	
		2000	171	1,86	,978	,075	
		3000	87	1,77	1,138	,122	
		5000	35	1,37	,547	,092	
101	I use all means available to make words clear.	-1000	278	3,56	1,194	,072	,000
		1000	128	3,92	1,214	,107	
		2000	171	4,08	1,003	,077	
		3000	87	3,98	,988	,106	
		5000	35	4,11	,832	,141	

Once again, the group of low achievers stated they focused only on vocabulary taught by the teacher or related to exams much more frequently than the remaining students, where the more proficient the group, the more independent and self-didactic they were.

As could be seen in this section, the proficiency variable proved to be a very important factor of discrepancy among students. It has been observed both that successful learners make use of vocabulary strategies more frequently than less successful ones and that they actually choose different techniques when facing particular learning situations. However, this will be discussed in further detail later on.

4.1.3. Results of the TVLSQ

In the present study, once the responses provided by the students were analysed, I moved on to the reverse pole of the learning of vocabulary, that is, the role performed by teachers.

The main aim was to draw a comparison between students and teachers concerning their beliefs about vocabulary and vocabulary strategies. For this purpose, the *Teachers Vocabulary Learning Strategies Questionnaire* (TVLSQ) was designed (cf. section 3.3.2.2)

As the version employed to collect data from students, it also contained three parts: Part 1 (personal information), Part 2 (beliefs about vocabulary learning) and Part 3 (vocabulary learning strategies employed by their students). Part two contained exactly the same items as the SVLSQ; the only difference was in the section regarding motivation where teachers were asked about their own

students. For example, in the SVLSQ, item 7 was *I like learning the vocabulary of this foreign language*, in the teachers' questionnaire this item was worded as *I think that my students like learning English vocabulary*. All the statements had to be answered using the same 5-point Likert scale as that of the students.

Part 3 was completely different from SVLSQ; teachers were not asked about the individual learning strategies used by their students but only about the five general subscales, namely, discovery strategies, storage into memory, vocabulary retrieval, vocabulary use and metacognitive techniques. Besides, there also was an open question at the end of each section, where teachers could add further comments or remarks about their teaching experience.

4.1.3.1. Teachers' beliefs about vocabulary: descriptive statistics

The section of beliefs about vocabulary contained the same 34 statements of the SVLSQ, subcategorised into motivation, linguistics, vocabulary learning and teaching, and assessment aspects. However, some of them were re-worded to elicit teachers' ideas about the way they perceived their students, so as to find out whether students and teachers shared similar views or not. The same 5-point Likert scale (from 1 "absolutely disagree" to 5 "absolutely agree") was used to rate each statement. Here are the results (Table 84).

As for motivational aspects, teachers considered that their students really liked learning English vocabulary but that they were not so willing to use it outside the classroom. Moreover, it is remarkable to see that they were not quite sure about the motivation of their students to learn vocabulary since they reported the same medium score for the three main reasons given, that is, a) *because it is useful to*

find a good job, b) because it is useful to understand material of my interest and c) because it is useful to communicate with foreign people. They did not claim one of them to be more important than the rest; means scores for the three items were very similar (items 9-11).

Apart from this, they stated that their students had a self-perception of being moderately successful in the learning of vocabulary and also moderately satisfied with their vocabulary stocks. Nevertheless, in the light of the results obtained, teachers firmly believed that students experienced great anxiety when they tried to express themselves in English and could not find the desired word (M=3.88).

Finally, teaching professionals believed that their students made medium effort to learn English vocabulary, not giving up very easily despite the difficulties found (items 15 and 17). However, notwithstanding the fact that vocabulary complexity was not enough for them to quit studying, teachers claimed that the materials employed to teach them English vocabulary should not be boring; if that were the case, their students would surely abandon this task.

As regards a number of linguistic features connected with vocabulary learning, all professionals were convinced that the vocabulary of a particular community inevitably reflects its own culture (M=4.33). Moreover, they really considered vocabulary as important as any other aspect in FL teaching; however, they were really against the assertion that learning a FL was essentially learning its vocabulary. As for the complexity of English vocabulary, they rated it as moderately difficult to learn.

When inquired about the way vocabulary is learnt, teachers acknowledged the relevant role played by context in learning new words. Indeed, they supported the idea that, since words make sense only within a context, new vocabulary could only be learnt in context. This was reinforced by item 25, defended by all teachers, which asserts that one can learn vocabulary simply by encountering it several times in different contexts. Besides, they all considered guessing words in context as one of the best ways to learn new vocabulary.

Apart from that, there was general consensus in acknowledging the importance of collocational sets and words that normally occur with words. However, in the light of the medium scores observed, teachers were less determined towards self-learning or reading as the best ways to learn new vocabulary. Conversely, all teaching professionals rejected the memorisation of individual items as the only way of learning a great amount of vocabulary.

Furthermore, teachers supported the idea that learners should go beyond word translation and know at least its form, meaning and basic use. Nevertheless, they were not so sure about whether vocabulary required clear and systematic teaching ($M=3.30$). They also claimed that words should be presented to students in groups rather than isolated and they also believed strongly that if some vocabulary items were to be taught out of context, this should be compensated with in-context teaching. In contrast with this, they showed less determination towards analysing word morphology or making word lists.

Table 84: Teachers' beliefs about vocabulary learning

ITEM N ^o	ITEM DESCRIPTION	N	X	SD	SE
7	My students like learning vocabulary.	108	3,70	1,025	0,1
8	My students like using vocabulary outside class.	107	2,61	0,929	0,09
9	My students learn vocabulary mainly because it is useful to find a good job.	107	2,93	0,918	0,09
10	My students learn vocabulary mainly to understand movies, songs, videogames, etc.	107	3,08	0,972	0,09
11	My students learn vocabulary mainly because it is useful to communicate with foreign people.	107	2,90	1,072	0,1
12	My students consider themselves good at learning vocabulary.	104	3,08	0,844	0,08
13	My students think they know enough vocabulary.	106	2,84	0,977	0,09
14	My students get anxious when trying to speak in English.	107	3,88	1,034	0,1
15	My students give up studying vocabulary if it is too difficult.	106	3,28	1,049	0,1
16	My students give up studying vocabulary if it is too boring.	106	3,91	1,019	0,1
17	My students make a great effort to learn vocabulary.	107	3,12	0,876	0,08
18	The culture of a community is reflected in its vocabulary.	107	4,33	0,833	0,08
19	Learning a FL is essentially learning it vocabulary.	108	2,44	1,062	0,1
20	Vocabulary is less important than other aspects.	108	2,03	0,961	0,09
21	English vocabulary is difficult to learn.	106	2,72	1,031	0,1
22	Self-learning is the best way to learn vocabulary.	106	3,09	1,01	0,1
23	Vocabulary is essentially learnt by reading.	107	3,32	0,996	0,1
24	Vocabulary can only be learnt in context.	105	3,88	1,026	0,1
25	You can learn vocabulary only by encountering a word in different contexts.	104	3,84	0,849	0,08
26	Guessing word meaning in context is the best way to learn vocabulary.	108	4,01	0,704	0,07
27	You can only learn vocabulary by memorising individual words.	108	2,06	0,83	0,08
28	Collocations and sets of phrases are very important in vocabulary learning.	107	4,24	0,763	0,07
29	Using vocabulary is more important than memorising words.	108	4,59	0,627	0,06
30	The minimum a student should know is word meaning and basic usage.	108	4,14	1,063	0,1
31	Vocabulary asks for clear and systematic teaching.	104	3,30	0,944	0,09
32	Words must not be presented in isolation but in groups.	108	3,76	1,058	0,1
33	It is important to pay attention to word structure.	107	3,40	1,063	0,1
34	Out-of-context teaching must be completed with in-context teaching.	104	4,17	0,864	0,08
35	Teachers should create word lists for students.	105	2,74	1,144	0,11
36	Teachers' role: explaining word meaning in context.	107	2,56	1,092	0,11
37	Teachers' role: providing students with learning strategies.	106	4,49	0,59	0,06
38	Vocabulary tests are acceptable.	107	3,70	0,882	0,09
39	Tests must be based on frequency lists.	106	2,58	1,095	0,11
40	Tests must be based on usefulness of words rather than on frequency.	105	3,41	0,917	0,09

As far as their main role in vocabulary teaching is concerned, they were truly convinced that their main task was to encourage learners' autonomy by providing them with learning strategies. However, they did not discard the idea of their main function consisting in explaining words in their context of occurrence; this idea, however, received only a moderate support. Finally, they all acknowledged

the suitability of specific tests to evaluate vocabulary knowledge, although they did not have a clear idea whether they should be based on lists of words chosen by their frequency of occurrence or by their usefulness to students.

4.1.3.2. VLSs: descriptive statistics

The last part of the TVLSQ asked teachers to rate how frequently their students made use of vocabulary learning strategies. It included only five general items, devoted to the five main subscales of strategies: strategies used to discover and understand the meaning of new vocabulary, strategies used for storing it into memory, strategies to retrieve words from memory, strategies to make use of previously learnt material and, finally, self-regulating or metacognitive techniques.

Figure 38 illustrates the mean scores that teachers assigned to the use their students made of the aforementioned strategies. Roughly speaking, on the five point scale, teachers considered that their students made use of learning strategies to a medium extent. Within this framework of medium use, they believed that students' preferred strategies were those related to discovering and understanding the meaning of new words (Mean=3.31; SD=,821; SE=,08), followed by memory strategies (Mean=3.17; SD=,860; SE=,08), strategies for using already learnt vocabulary (Mean=3.16; SD=,883; SE=,09), strategies for retrieving vocabulary (Mean=3,12; SD=,883; SE=,09) and slightly less frequently, metacognitive strategies (Mean=3,00; SD=,851; SE=,08). Comparisons with the average means obtained by students will be drawn later on.

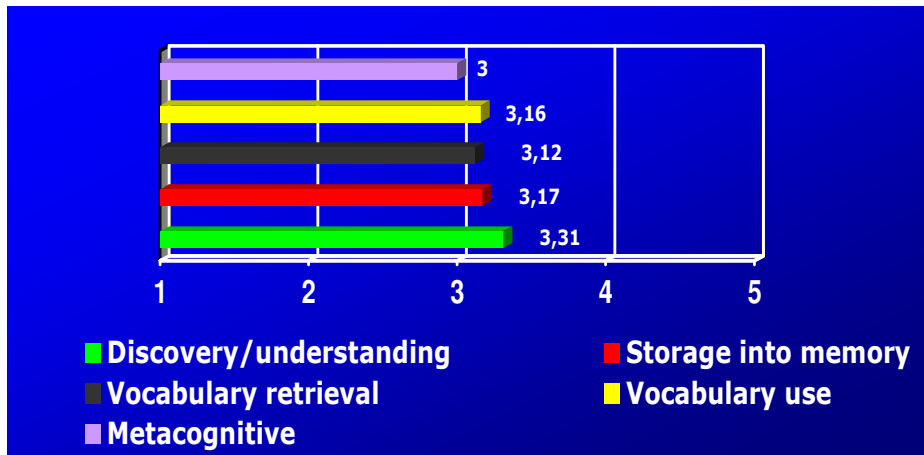


Figure 38: VLS use perceived by teachers

4.1.3.3. Teachers' responses to open questions

As previously stated, both part 2 and 3 of the TVLSQ ended with an open question, so that teachers could provide further comments or explanations about any aspect of the teaching of vocabulary. As was the case with the data elicited from students, teachers' responses to these open questions were also coded and processed using SPSS 11.0 software.

Thirty-six teachers out of a total of 108 answered these questions, which means 33.3% of the total sample. As regards their beliefs about vocabulary, their main concern was the complete lack of motivation observed in students towards EFL, in general, and towards vocabulary, in particular. In fact, sixteen per cent of the responses expressed this preoccupation, emphasising that students' main goal was passing the exam rather than learning the language.

One of them also pointed out that the current educational system did not encourage both students and teachers to pay attention to learning strategies,

which supports the idea that students do not resort to learning strategies (8,3% of the collected comments).

Moreover, the same percentage of teachers acknowledged the importance of FL vocabulary within the framework of FL teaching, especially for communicative purposes. One of these professionals insisted on the idea that grammar teaching was overemphasised, whereas other teachers questioned stated that students' poor self-perception as vocabulary learners makes them giving up. Finally, it was also mentioned that students did not like studying vocabulary so it is necessary to resort to new technologies and games to get them motivated.

As for the vocabulary learning strategies mentioned, Table 85 illustrates those techniques that are considered as frequently used by their students.

Table 85: VLSs mentioned by teachers in the open question

CATEGORY	STRATEGY	N	%
Discovery strategies	Guessing strategies.	2	3,2%
	Analysing word parts (prefixes, suffixes...).	1	1,6%
	Comparison to L1 words.	6	9,7%
	Dictionary strategies.	1	1,6%
	Asking the teacher for word translation.	2	3,2%
	Asking classmates for word translation.	1	1,6%
Storage into memory strategies	Oral repetition.	1	1,6%
	Word families.	2	3,2%
	Word grouping by topic.	4	6,5%
	Word grouping by formal structure.	1	1,6%
	Looking for synonyms/antonyms...	4	6,5%
	Embedding words in contexts (sentences, stories...).	3	4,8%
	Using pictures or drawings to remember words.	4	6,5%
	Associating words and sounds.	1	1,6%
	Word lists.	1	1,6%
	Flashcards.	1	1,6%
	Taking notes.	1	1,6%
Vocabulary use	Speaking by using new words.	4	6,5%
	Using new words in writing.	3	4,8%
	Knowing when to learn/skip words.	1	1,6%
Metacognitive	Using English songs to learn vocabulary.	6	9,7%
	Using mass media and new technologies, games.	11	17,7%
	Reading as much as possible to learn vocabulary.	1	1,6%
Total		62	100,0%

Twenty-one per cent of the total number of strategies mentioned corresponded to the category of meaning discovery/understanding. Here, teachers considered that students resorted mainly to comparing the new TL word to one of their L1 in order to guess its possible meaning (9.7%). Then, with lower percentages, teachers pointed out that students employed context to guess word meaning or to divide words into parts, paying special attention to common prefixes and suffixes.

Vocabulary strategies were only mentioned once, since teachers considered that students preferred asking them directly or asking their classmates for a translation of the new word.

The vast majority of the teachers questioned (37.1% of the total) also claimed that students relied mainly on storage into memory strategies. The strategies most commonly mentioned belonged to the set of strategies that involve the creation of mental linkages between words, such as grouping new words related to a topic or establishing relations of synonymy or antonymity (6.5% each). To a lesser extent, other strategies, such as creating groups of words according to word families or words with similar parts (happy, happily, unhappy...) or embedding words into contexts, in sentences or stories, were also mentioned.

Moreover, one of the most supposedly popular techniques among students was making use of visual aids, such as drawings or pictures to remember vocabulary. Besides, repeating words orally and establishing associations between words on account of the way they sound were also mentioned. Finally, note-taking strategies, word lists and flashcards were less commonly referred to by

teachers. Apart from that, some teachers believed that students made use of previously learnt vocabulary both in oral conversation and in written composition, actually, 11.3% of the total number of strategies.

As for the last category, that is, metacognitive strategies, many of the teachers firmly believed that the most important source of vocabulary learning for students was the mass media (press, TV), new technologies (Internet, DVD, videogames, etc) or English songs, where they could find vocabulary that suited their interests and needs. Only one of them mentioned reading as a frequently employed method to learn vocabulary, whereas another one claimed that students also learnt to spot which were the key words in a text.

4.1.3.4. Reported beliefs and VLS use in terms of variables

In the light of the data obtained from the SVLSQ, the relationship between the teachers' background characteristics and their ideas about vocabulary and their perceptions of students' strategy use was also examined. Once again, four variables were considered to carry out this analysis: gender, age, grade level and teaching experience. The data obtained were processed by using one-way ANOVA statistical test.

4.1.3.4.1. Gender differences

Roughly speaking, it could be argued that no significant correlations were found between gender and the appreciation of learning strategies used by students. However, in the case of beliefs about vocabulary, significant differences between male and female teachers were found in three particular items.

The first of them belongs to the category of students' motivation to learn English vocabulary. Item 16 asked teachers whether their students quitted studying vocabulary if they found the materials used boring. As shown in Table 86, both groups considered this statement to be true although male scores were slightly higher. This means that men thought that the materials employed in vocabulary teaching exerted a great influence upon students, whereas women seemed not to be so sure about it.

Table 86: Differences in teachers' beliefs about vocabulary learning according to gender (Part 1)

ITEM	BELIEF STATEMENT	SOURCE	N	X	SD	SE	P
16	My students give up studying vocabulary if it is too boring.	MALE	23	4,30	,635	,132	,033
		FEMALE	83	3,80	1,079	,118	

The second divergent item was related to a number of linguistic features connected with vocabulary learning. It stated that the role of vocabulary in the development of the FL competence was less important than any other aspect, such as grammar. Table 87 shows that neither men nor women agreed with the aforementioned statement; male teachers, however, seemed to be slightly more against it than females.

Table 87: Differences in teachers' beliefs about vocabulary learning according to gender (Part 2)

ITEM	BELIEF STATEMENT	SOURCE	N	X	SD	SE	P
20	Vocabulary is less important than other aspects.	MALE	23	1,65	,832	,173	,034
		FEMALE	85	2,13	,973	,106	

Finally, there was also a divergence when asked about how language is learnt. The same pattern of item 16 is reproduced in item 24; male teachers supported

slightly more strongly than females the idea that since words make sense only within a context, new vocabulary should be taught in a particular context.

Table 88: Differences in teachers' beliefs about vocabulary learning according to gender (Part 3)

ITEM	BELIEF STATEMENT	SOURCE	N	X	SD	SE	P
24	Vocabulary can only be learnt in context.	MALE	23	4,26	,689	,144	,041
		FEMALE	82	3,77	1,081	,119	

As illustrated in the tables above, the average means of both groups were quite similar; nevertheless, men were more categorical than women in these three statements, either to support or to reject them.

4.1.3.4.2. Age differences

Once the results elicited were processed according to the One-way ANOVA statistical test, only one significant difference was identified in the overall scores obtained for beliefs about vocabulary between different groups of age, up 50 year-old teachers, subdivided into scales of decades.

This difference concerns the way vocabulary should be taught; it refers more particularly to the teachers' selection of words to make a list with important vocabulary for students. Table 89 shows a polarisation of opinions: on the one hand, the youngest groups (up to 40 years old) were against word lists as a teaching technique (all means below 2.50), whereas their older counterparts seemed to be more prone to making use of them: in the case of the latter, their scores were significantly higher, especially among those in their forties. This could be interpreted as a variation between younger and older generations; however,

we should be cautious in this respect as this was the only element significantly different among groups.

Table 89: Differences in teachers' beliefs about vocabulary learning according to age

ITEM	BELIEF STATEMENT	SOURCE	N	X	SD	SE	P
35	Teachers should create word lists for students.	Up to 30	18	2,44	1,097	,258	,015
		31-40	44	2,48	,952	,144	
		41-50	26	3,31	1,192	,234	
		+50	11	2,55	1,368	,413	

4.1.3.4.3. Grade level differences

This variable was taken into account because it was reasonable to think that high school, university and school of languages teachers would show variation both in their ideas about vocabulary and in the perception of the use of strategies made by their pupils. Indeed, this factor was the source of the highest variation among subjects; in fact, there were six items where significant divergences were found concerning both beliefs about vocabulary and students' learning strategies.

The aforementioned hypothesis could be confirmed if we connect it with students' motivation to learn vocabulary. Table 90 shows that the majority of teaching professionals considered that their students liked using vocabulary outside the classroom to a medium extent, being, as expected, university lecturers the most clearly convinced, with scores slightly higher than the remaining groups. Conversely, both primary school and professionals teaching at other institutions rejected the idea that their pupils could be interested in using vocabulary outside the classroom; this may be due to the fact that primary school learners may have not yet developed the ability of managing vocabulary in an autonomous way.

The other motivational item under discussion stated that learners studied vocabulary mainly because they considered it very useful to find a good job. The overall mean was a moderate agreement with this assertion; nevertheless, university and EOI professionals were slightly more categorical than the rest of the teachers involved.

Table 90: Differences in teachers' beliefs about vocabulary learning according to the grade variable (Part 1)

ITEM	BELIEF STATEMENT	SOURCE	N	X	SD	SE	P
8	My students like using vocabulary outside class.	Primary school	19	2,42	,902	,207	,018
		ESO	14	2,64	1,008	,269	
		BAC	20	2,55	,945	,211	
		University	14	3,36	1,151	,308	
		EOI	24	2,63	,647	,132	
		Other	16	2,19	,750	,188	
9	My students learn vocabulary mainly because it is useful to find a good job.	Primary school	19	2,79	,976	,224	,038
		ESO	14	2,57	,852	,228	
		BAC	19	2,68	,885	,203	
		University	14	3,43	,852	,228	
		EOI	25	3,24	,926	,185	
		Other	16	2,75	,775	,194	

The following divergent item was related to the way vocabulary is learnt. Thus it was claimed that in this learning process, set phrases and collocations that normally occur with a particular word should also be considered. As shown in Table 91, all groups supported this idea although post-compulsory secondary education, university and school of languages professionals' values were slightly higher.

Table 91: Differences in teachers' beliefs about vocabulary learning according to the grade variable (Part 2)

ITEM	BELIEF STATEMENT	SOURCE	N	X	SD	SE	P
28	Collocations and sets of phrases are very important in vocabulary learning.	Primary school	18	4,06	,639	,151	,030
		ESO	14	3,93	,730	,195	
		BAC	20	4,30	,733	,164	
		University	14	4,50	,650	,174	
		EOI	25	4,56	,583	,117	
		Other	16	3,94	1,063	,266	

Finally, there was also discrepancy among professionals with regard to the ways and the methods for teaching vocabulary. Again, the groups of university and EOI teachers were the main point of variation; when they were asked whether teachers should create lists of words for students to learn, the vast majority reported a medium support to this idea; the aforementioned groups, however, were clearly against the use of word lists as a teaching technique.

Table 92: Differences in teachers' beliefs about vocabulary learning according to the grade variable (Part 3)

ITEM	BELIEF STATEMENT	SOURCE	N	X	SD	SE	P
35	Teachers should create word lists for students.	Primary school	19	3,00	1,155	,265	,041
		ESO	14	3,07	,829	,221	
		BAC	19	2,95	1,393	,320	
		University	13	2,38	,870	,241	
		EOI	24	2,17	,963	,197	
		Other	16	3,06	1,237	,309	

As previously mentioned, not only were there relevant differences in ideas about vocabulary, but also in their perceptions of the vocabulary strategies used by their students. Thus, most teachers considered to a medium extent that students resorted to strategies that entailed the use of already learnt words and to strategies that regulated their own learning process, as illustrated in Table 93.

Table 93: Differences in VLS use perceived by teachers according to the grade variable

ITEM	STRATEGY CATEGORY	SOURCE	N	X	SD	SE	P
44	Vocabulary use strategies.	Primary school	18	3,17	,786	,185	,037
		ESO	14	3,50	,760	,203	
		BAC	20	2,65	,813	,182	
		University	12	3,58	,669	,193	
		EOI	25	3,16	,850	,170	
		Other	15	3,20	1,146	,296	
45	Metacognitive strategies.	Primary school	19	3,00	,667	,153	,008
		ESO	14	3,57	,756	,202	
		BAC	20	2,80	,894	,200	
		University	12	3,50	,674	,195	
		EOI	25	2,80	,816	,163	
		Other	16	2,69	,946	,237	

Curiously enough, there were two groups of teachers who did not quite follow the previous tendency and gave credit to their pupils for using the

aforementioned category strategies quite frequently (all means above 3.50). They were secondary school teachers (ESO) and university lecturers; this should be borne in mind for further analyses.

4.1.3.4.4. Differences according to teaching experience

Teaching experience did not prove to be very relevant in the discrepancy of responses arisen among subjects; only one out of the total TVLSQ items was found to be significantly different.

Participants were divided into four groups according to their teaching experience and, as shown in Table 94, when they were asked whether their pupils liked learning English vocabulary, some relevant differences in average means were observed.

Here, both the least and the most experienced groups of teachers were convinced that their students were willing to learn vocabulary, although those with the lowest degree of experience were slightly more optimistic than the other group (means of 4.00 vs. 3.62). However, the intermediate group, that is, teachers who have been teaching from 11 to 20 years considered that students liked learning vocabulary only to a medium extent (M=3.27), which somehow contradicts the higher scores of the remaining groups.

Table 94: Differences in teachers' beliefs about vocabulary learning according to teaching experience

ITEM	BELIEF STATEMENT	SOURCE	N	X	SD	SE	P
7	My students like learning vocabulary.	0-10	54	4,00	,824	,112	,004
		11-20	33	3,27	1,153	,201	
		+20	21	3,62	1,071	,234	

To make it short, the quantitative results of students reported in this chapter indicate an overall moderate use of vocabulary learning strategies. Significant differences were found both in the reported beliefs about vocabulary and in the use of strategies as a whole or in the individual items which varied significantly in patterns of use depending on the four background variables under discussion, i.e. gender, age, grade level and prior EFL instruction.

Relevant differences across variables were observed in particular items belonging to the category of beliefs; however, the amount of English instruction seemed to exert less influence than the other three variables.

Nevertheless, all these factors proved to be influential in the choice and use of vocabulary learning strategies. Thus, gender divergences arose from the fact that women reported a higher frequent use of learning strategies, especially metacognitive techniques. As for age and grade level variables, similar figures were found as regards the frequent use of discovery and metacognitive strategies in the case of older students (over 21) and those participants at university level, Schools of Languages and other institutions. The least significant factor was that of learning experience; only those students with more than 10 years of EFL instruction outscored the remaining participants in the use of metacognitive techniques.

Furthermore, the results obtained in the VLT reveal that the largest part of this sample was formed by low proficient learners since their command of English vocabulary was inferior to 1000 words. Besides, female learners performed better than male students and, as expected, older learners outscored younger ones.

Finally, university learners and students with more than ten years of English instruction obtained the best results.

Proficiency levels accounted for significant discrepancies among students in their beliefs about vocabulary; everything seems to indicate that the more proficient the learner, the more frequent the use of learning strategies.

As far as teachers are concerned, the results obtained were more homogeneous than those of their students and particular items showing significant differences according to the aforementioned four variables (gender, age, grade level and EFL teaching experience) were low. Key findings will be presented and further discussed in the following chapters.

4.2. Qualitative data analysis: the interviews

This section will present the data elicited with another research instrument, that is, the semi-structured interview. As outlined earlier, (cf. Section 3.3.3), two interview formats were designed, one for students and one for teachers; this was done in order to confirm and contrast the responses provided by participants in the questionnaires.

During the first and second phases of the data collection from high schools, universities and schools of languages, a total number of 712 students and 108 teachers completed their corresponding questionnaires. Once the data were coded, processed and analysed, the third and fourth phases of the present study began. A total of 115 pupils and 27 professionals out of those aforementioned students and teachers volunteered to participate in the interviews.

Before going into a detailed analysis of the data collected during these stages, a brief account of the participants will be offered in a descriptive manner, using the SPSS 11.0 computer software.

In accordance with the results elicited from the questionnaires, we managed to obtain volunteer interviewees belonging to the different groups chosen to act as selection criteria, namely, gender, age, proficiency, level test, years studying/teaching English and teaching institution.

As far as students are concerned, Figure 39 shows the distribution of students according to their grade and level:

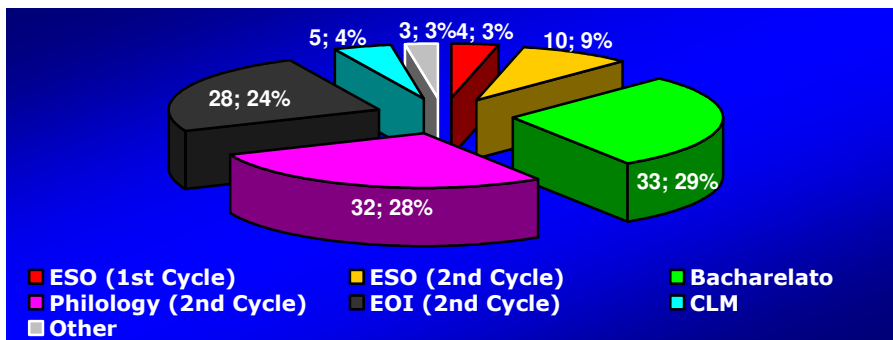


Figure 39: Number and distribution of interviewee students according to grade

Consequently, their ages vary considerably as seen in Figure 40 and the same applies to the number of years they had been studying English and the teaching institution (See Figure 41 and Table 95 below).

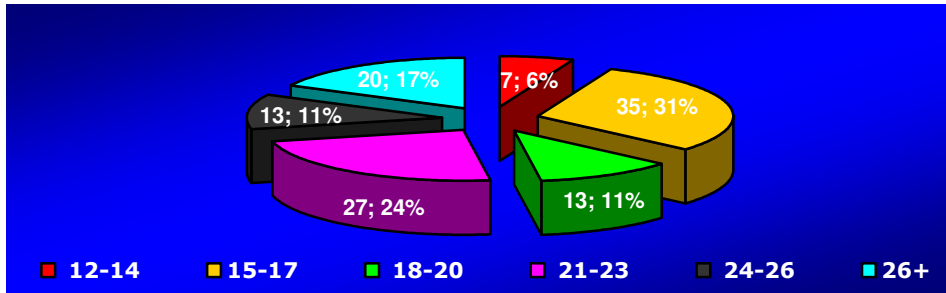


Figure 40: Number and distribution of students interviewed according to age

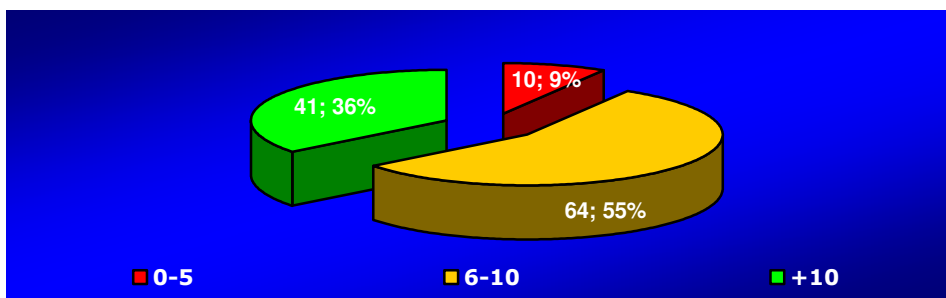


Figure 41: Number and distribution of students interviewed according to the period of EFL instruction

Table 95: Number and distribution of students interviewed according to teaching institution

Teaching institution	N	%
IES Melide	14	12,2
IES Arzúa	9	7,8
IES Somo	2	1,7
IES C. J. Cela (Padrón)	10	8,7
IES M ^a Casares (Oleiros)	12	10,4
USC	9	7,8
UDC	4	3,5
UVIGO	9	7,8
CLM	21	18,3
EOI Santiago	4	3,5
EOI Ferrol	8	7,0
EOI Lugo	11	9,6
Other	2	1,7
Total	115	100%

Finally, the proportion of male students who volunteered for this interview was outnumbered by that of females; seventy-five (65.2%) out of the total number were women versus forty men (34.8%).

As for the group of teaching professionals, females (n=18) doubled the number of males (n=9) and their ages ranged from 25 to over 50. Moreover, they represented diverse grades, different teaching experience and teaching institution as shown in Figures 42, 43 and Table 96, respectively:

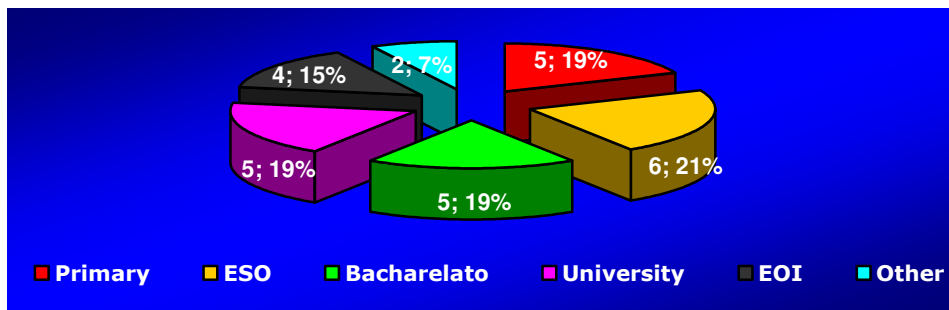


Figure 42: Number and distribution of teachers interviewed according to the grade variable

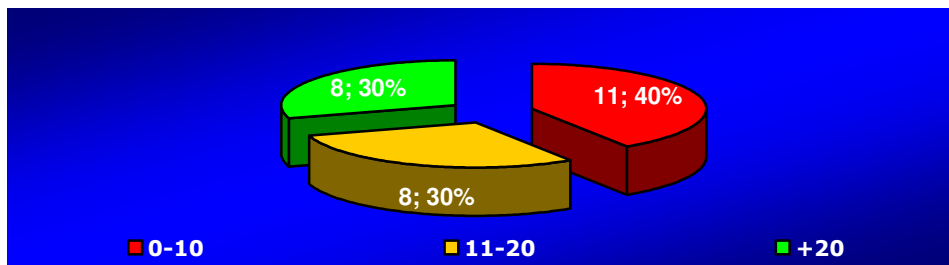


Figure 43: Number and distribution of teachers interviewed according to age

Table 96: Number and distribution of teachers interviewed according to teaching institution

Teaching institution	N	%
IES C. J. Cela (Padrón)	2	7,4
IES M ^a Casares (Oleiros)	1	3,7
USC	1	3,7
UDC	1	3,7
UVIGO	3	11,1
CLM	1	3,7
EOI Santiago	4	14,8
Other	14	51,9
Total	27	100%

As explained above, the purpose of this interview was, on the one hand, to encourage students and teachers to reflect on the process of vocabulary learning and teaching, laying especial emphasis on their background assumptions about the acquisition of lexicon. On the other hand, they were required to verbalise the strategies employed during the four stages of vocabulary learning, that is, to discover the meaning of a new word, to store it into memory, to retrieve it from memory when necessary and, finally, to make an automatic use of it. In the case of teachers, they were inquired about their perceptions of the students' most common techniques throughout the aforementioned learning stages.

All the data gathered from these interviews, both face-to-face and those conducted via phone, were recorded on audiotape and subsequently transcribed by the researcher for further content analysis. Li (2004: 178) refers to Neuman (1997) who provides an explanation on how to use Wenden's content analysis:

Content analysis is a technique for examining information, or content, in written or symbolic material... In content analysis, a researcher first identifies a body of material to analyse... and then creates a system for recording specific aspects of it. The system might include counting how often certain words or themes occur. Finally, the researcher records what was found in the material. He or she often measures information in the content as numbers...

Accordingly, both students' and teachers' transcriptions of the interviews were interpreted and coded in order to categorise specific beliefs and strategies about vocabulary learning. Thus, all responses were analysed one by one and subcategorised taking into account, on the one hand, concrete beliefs about EFL vocabulary and, on the other hand, those strategies employed to face each of the

four phases entailed in the learning of words: namely, discovery, storing, retrieval and use, together with the concrete text segment in which they appeared.

4.2.1. Students' interviews: General results

Both models of interview (students' and teachers') were divided into two main sections. Part 1 of the semi-structured interview consisted in the elicitation from the informants of ideas regarding the process of learning vocabulary based on the questionnaire statements but reworded in a different form.

Respondents were inquired about 12 items conceived as open questions that dealt with specific aspects of vocabulary learning, such as willingness to learn vocabulary, motivation, difficulties found during the process, self-confidence, learning techniques, teacher's role and their own ideas about the notion of learning strategy.

Part 2 of the interview was aimed at gathering data to either confirm or explain in further detail those strategies that students claimed to use in the questionnaire. So interviewees were required to reflect upon what they did throughout the whole the process of vocabulary learning: firstly, to discover and understand the meaning of new words; secondly, to store this new vocabulary items into memory; thirdly, to retrieve from memory already stored vocabulary and, finally, to use this new vocabulary. Two final questions inquired about their use of metacognitive strategies, asking them whether they planned or regulated their own learning process.

The interview finished with a totally open question where students could add any further opinion or remark. The results obtained will be presented separately,

according to the two different sections: beliefs about vocabulary and reported vocabulary learning strategies.

4.2.1.1. Students' beliefs about vocabulary

In this section, the beliefs about vocabulary learning of 115 subjects interviewed are identified. Relevant comments obtained from the interviewees are quoted and examples are presented to illustrate their own opinions and assumptions.

The first three questions are concerned with the nature and characteristics of vocabulary itself. Questions 4 and 5 are devoted to students' perceived ability to learn vocabulary, whereas the following four questions are related to the process of teaching and learning words. Finally, questions 10, 11 and 12 tackle the notion of learning strategies and the possibility of being instructed in their use. The responses to the twelve open-ended questions will be presented in turn.

➤ *Open question 1: When you are studying English, do you like studying vocabulary?*

This question was intended to find out the extent to which students' liking or disliking of vocabulary might affect the results obtained. The elicited results show that the majority of the interviewees like studying vocabulary (61%); however, a percentage of thirty-nine per cent do not like it, which confirms the data obtained from the questionnaires. Thus, learning vocabulary seems to be a linguistic aspect highly valued by students; here are some illustrative comments such as: "eu prefiro estudar vocabulario ca gramática porque me resulta máis doado..." (interview 11), expressing their preference for vocabulary over grammar; "O vocabulario non é o que máis pesado se me fai porque vas aprendendo como se

din as cousas...” (int. 37), stating the idea that vocabulary helps you to express things; “gústame bastante porque creo que é útil.” (int. 43), arguing that vocabulary is useful; “Fáiseme ameno se o practico na clase e se o vocabulario novo que imos aprendendo o empregamos en situacións reais. Aprendelo de memoria palabra por palabra [...] non me vai ben” (int. 51), emphasising the importance of using words instead of rote memorisation.

➤ *Open question 2: why do you study new vocabulary in English?*

The second question sought to investigate the effect of motivation on their learning progress. There was a wide range of different answers; they can be summed up as follows:

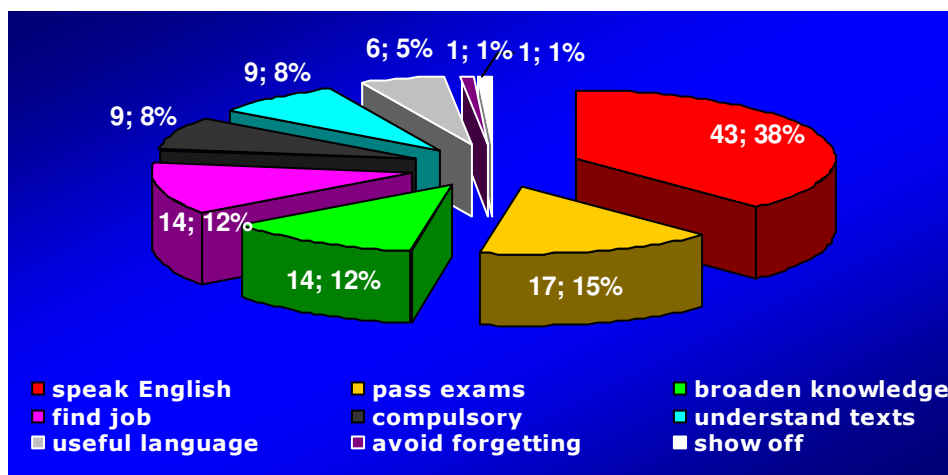


Figure 44: Students’ reasons for learning EFL vocabulary

The majority of the subjects interviewed (38%) stated that their main reason to study vocabulary was to express themselves better in English, matching the results elicited from the questionnaires. Thus, we obtained answers such as, “porque me parece muy importante saber vocabulario en una lengua y saber de

qué estoy hablando...” (int. 24) or “É unha ferramenta fundamental loxicamente para aprender o idioma. Por moita gramática que saibas se non tes una base de vocabulario para manexarte é imposible” (int. 104), both of them emphasising the importance of lexical competence to master a foreign language.

The next most commonly mentioned reason was, as expected, to pass exams (15%), for instance, “para saber responder ás preguntas do exame” (int. 21) or “Sabes que vai entrar no exame e tes que chapalo” (int. 28). Others claimed to study vocabulary either to broaden their knowledge of the foreign language (12%) or because they considered that English would help them to find a good job (12%), this was precisely one of the most frequently stated reasons obtained from the questionnaires. Indeed, there were replies, such as “O principal, a verdade, é pola saída que ten porque se non a min particularmente gústame máis o francés” (interview 3) or “penso que ten moitas vantaxes de cara a un futuro profesional” (int. 8).

To a lesser extent, some pupils reported studying vocabulary to understand texts (8%) or simply because it is compulsory to pass the English course (8%); a smaller number of them (5%) consider English to be a useful language so studying its vocabulary is really worth it, for example, “Agora para moitas cousas fai falta inglés, para internet ou así, enton ás veces axuda moito para iso” (int. 40).

Finally, one of our volunteers (1%) admitted studying vocabulary so as to avoid forgetting previously learnt words, whereas another one confessed he used English words just to show off.

Through these interviews the number of reasons given by learners to study English vocabulary was higher than those of the questionnaires; in the case of latter, they were provided with given motives whereas here they were open questions, this means that pupils could come up with their own reasons more spontaneously.

➤ *Open question 3: Do you think that English vocabulary is difficult to learn? If so, why?*

Students are required to express their opinion about the difficulty or not of learning vocabulary. The answer was really clear, 72.6% of the interviewees argued that learning new words in English was not a difficult task; in contrast, 27.4% of them considered it to be hard. When the latter were asked about the reasons why it seemed to be a complex activity for them, there was a wide variety of answers (Figure 45): thirty-five per cent out of this minoritarian group of pupils attached the difficulty of vocabulary learning to the Germanic nature of English, a linguistic feature that makes it very different from their mother tongue as, for instance, “porque non ten a mesma procedencia románica, pois diferénciase moito do español” (int. 8). Moreover, twenty-one per cent confessed that they tended to forget known words very easily and that was why it was so hard to learn, .e.g. “É que aprendeste unhas palabras de vocabulario e úsalas no exame e despois xa non as volves practicamente a utilizar” (int. 41). A lower number of students (14%) referred to the great amount of polysemic words in English as the main source of trouble, for example, “é moi extenso e ten moitos matices” (int. 115); whereas ten per cent of them admitted that they did not like vocabulary and

this made it difficult to learn. Other reasons reported by seven per cent of our interviewees are both the traditional methods employed to teach vocabulary and word spelling. In fact, some of them stated that memorising lists of words could be discouraging and make vocabulary learning harder: “Se che poñen unha lista, hai palabras que son moi parecidas e pareceche que todo acaba sendo o mesmo. Pero se o adquires lendo ou practicándoo [...] acábaseche pegando de forma natural” (int. 108). Lastly, one student argued that what makes learning vocabulary hard is the great number of the so called ‘false friends’ that may confuse learners, whereas another individual claimed that learning words is difficult because it is a very boring activity.

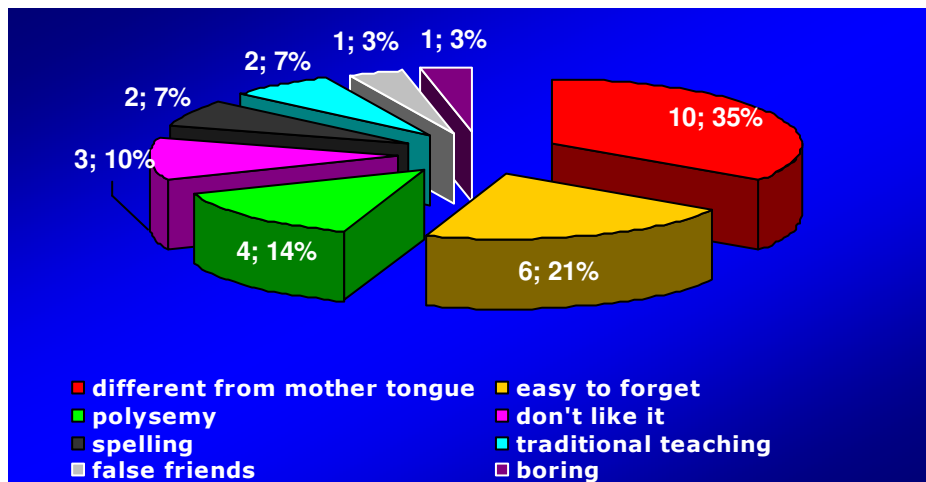


Figure 45: Reasons why EFL lexis is difficult to learn

➤ *Open question 4: Once you finish your studies, will you have acquired a vocabulary level that allows you to express yourself fluently?*

Both this question and the following ones were designed to test whether the students held positive views about their own capacities in the learning process. The interviewees (87.7%) firmly believe that they will become fluent speakers of

English once they complete the curriculum of this foreign language; however, only 12.3% are pessimistic about this.

➤ *Open question 5: Do you think you have a special ability to learn vocabulary?*

In spite of the positive perspectives elicited from the previous question, it is rather curious to see how the vast majority of them (65.5%) do not rate themselves as having a special ability to learn new words and only a small part of them (34.5%) feel confident in their ability.

➤ *Open question 6: Do you think it is worth spending class time on vocabulary teaching or do you prefer other aspects, such as grammar?*

In accordance with the replies obtained from this question, it could be argued that the vast majority of the students questioned seem to support the idea of devoting class time to vocabulary since 85.2% of them are in favour of this; on the contrary, 14.8% of them are more interested in other aspects, such as grammar; they considered that lexical acquisition was a matter of self-learning. Here are several quotes that refer to the necessity of paying more attention to vocabulary in class: “Penso que incluso se centran pouco no vocabulario e que dan moito por sabido e ao mellor céntranse na gramática...” (int. 1); “Convén saber gramática, por suposto, pero tamén o vocabulario é importante. Se non tes un bo manexo do vocabulario vaiche custar máis falar inglés...” (int. 8) or “aunque si no supieras gramática si estuvieras en un país de fuera con vocabulario te podían entender lo que necesitas, aunque la gramática no fuera correcta” (int. 58). However, the other group of interviewees maintained a completely different view: “Eu creo que

o vocabulario é moito máis fácil que a gramática. O vocabulario podes velo na túa casa e estudalo...” (int. 23).

➤ *Open question 7: What do you think vocabulary learning consists in? What are the best techniques to learn it?*

The responses elicited from this question were quite heterogeneous because pupils mentioned a variety of techniques used to learn new vocabulary items. They are represented in Figure 46; there are three techniques most widely reported by our students: reading, word lists and word grouping. Indeed, 27% of them considered that reading was the most effective way of learning new vocabulary and they also claimed that making use of context clues in order to infer the meaning of unknown words was a good means of expanding one’s own lexical competence, for instance, “eu sobre todo leo moito en inglés, entón ao ler pois xa se me queda o vocabulario. Non o chapo” (int. 64); “Eu creo que a lectura é o máis importante” (int. 69) or “Primeiro tento sacar as palabras polo contexto e se algunha non son capaz de sacala, pois miro no dicionario” (int. 88).

Apart from this strategy, 18% of the interviewees mentioned that they resorted to the sometimes underestimated method of making lists of words in order to memorise them. In general terms, they alluded to taking notes of those words they came across at random order together with the equivalent term in their mother tongue; this was done with the aim of revising them from time to time and especially immediately before an exam to keep them in their memory, for instance, “voy elaborando una lista con vocabulario con lo que hemos visto [...] un poco hoy y otro poco mañana, voy estudiándolo y se me va quedando...” (int.

47) or “listas de palabras e memorización” (int. 62). Likewise, a smaller percentage of them (12%) also resorted to this technique but in a different way. In fact, they avoided taking down vocabulary at random, they preferred to group lexical items taking into account their own made-up classification. Thus, some of them classify words by making lexical families (“agrupo as palabras en diferentes campos, por exemplo, a praia, de compras... e así xa as vou aprendendo” – int. 17); others prefer to do so by connecting them according to their grammatical category (nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc.) whereas others focus on their spelling (“asociar moito, fixarme na raíz das palabras...” – int. 53). Finally, 9% of the subjects claimed to make use of L2 authentic materials as a source of lexical learning. Indeed, they mentioned mass media (newspapers, TV, radio stations...) together with the Internet and L2 songs as a means of getting acquainted with the new vocabulary items that were gradually incorporated to their FL lexical background, e.g. “ao escoitar cancións en inglés vanme quedando as palabras e a pronunciación” (int. 14) or “Básicamente escuchar música. Casi toda la música que escucho es en inglés y de vez en cuando veo canales en inglés como la CNN o la BBC” (int. 56). Those were the four main types of strategies most commonly mentioned but there were also some minor categories worth mentioning, for example, the traditional technique of word repetition (either orally or written) had its room in the wide range of strategies, since 6% of the sample volunteers still resorted to it, for example, “Escribilo varias veces...” (int. 19).

Apart from that, a smaller number of interviewees (9%) stated that they tried to find any opportunity to use the FL and this led them to expand their lexical

competence, especially when interacting with native speakers, “Me gusta el idioma y me gusta practicalo con gente que lo habla. Me relaciono con gente extranjera para poder practicalo” (int. 9), “procuro hablar de diferentes temas, mantener conversaciones que mantengo en español, hacerlo en inglés” (int. 72); “o que fago bastante é chatear en inglés e aí aprendo moito” (int. 100) or “procuro falar con xente nativa” (int. 102).

As for the following 2 strategies, which were mentioned by 4% of our sample learners, they related either to practising or comparing activities. In the first case, some of them considered that classroom exercises, such as gap-filling activities or synonym matching were a good method of expanding their vocabulary.

In the second case, the students’ L1 plays an important role in the process of vocabulary learning, since it is used to draw a comparison between FL words, looking for similarities either in form or in meaning so as to create mental links between the L1 and FL items, “...cando unha palabra non me dá quedado asimíloa con outra que se lle pareza no meu idioma e [...] xa se me queda soa...” (int. 13). To a lesser extent, there was a group of 2 strategies of diverse nature reported by 3% of the learners. The first strategy is using the dictionary as a reference tool employed for the acquisition of new words. Learners claimed that in general terms when they resorted to dictionaries to find out the meaning of words they came across, these lexical items were never forgotten and developed their lexical competence, i.e. “Míroa no dicionario e apúntoa...” (int. 45). Others affirmed that they took down notes on new words but instead of making word lists they preferred to draw pictures or sketches representing these terms so as to store

their meaning into their memories more easily, i.e. “...fago esquemas e incluso debuxos coas palabras...” (int. 5).

Finally, there was a strategy mentioned by only 2% of the interviewees. They reported creating rhymes or songs where they embedded words in order to learn them more effectively, as in “ás veces pónome a cantar unha canción e quédome coa canción...” (int. 48).

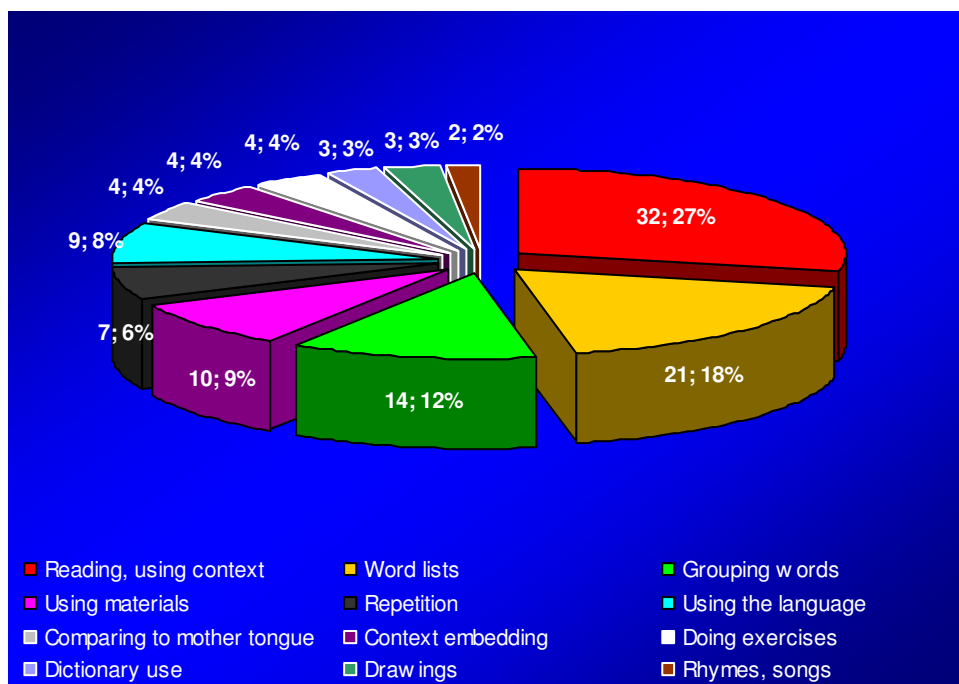


Figure 46: Techniques employed by students to learn vocabulary

➤ *Open question 8: Do you think you are being taught vocabulary in the right way? Can you describe it briefly?*

The replies obtained from the students show that 58% of them are satisfied with the way they are being taught EFL vocabulary; in contrast, 34% of them express their disagreement with this. Thus, our teaching professionals seem to meet the expectations of their students; however, some of them (8%) avoided the

answering of this question, either because they did not have a clear opinion or because they preferred not to say what they really thought about it.

Going into a more detailed description, on the one hand, those teaching techniques reported by interviewees as positive will be firstly analysed. Secondly, there will be a presentation of those techniques criticised by learners and finally, I will provide a summary of some of the suggestions made by pupils on the teaching of vocabulary.

8.1. Positive teaching techniques

The following four techniques were the most highly rated by the group of learners who held positive views about the way they were being taught English vocabulary; three of them have contextualised teaching as their main tool. These results match the data elicited from the questionnaires (Figure 47).

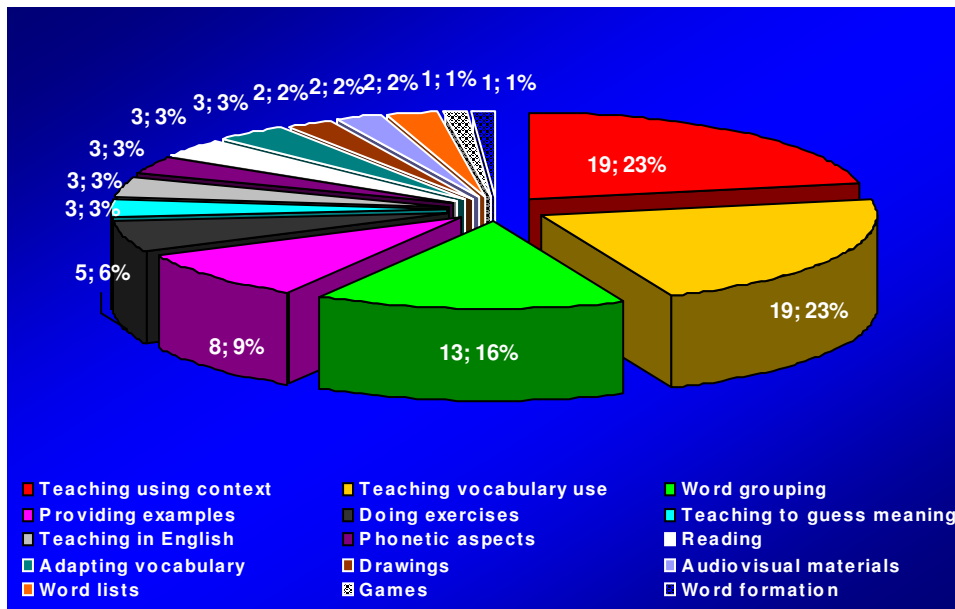


Figure 47: Teaching techniques labelled as “positive” by students

Twenty three per cent of the interviewees referred to the usefulness of those teaching techniques that are based on the use of the context for the presentation of new vocabulary. In fact, most of them made the point that vocabulary should be taught within a context, instead of using lists of words. The following quotations illustrate this point: “traballamos moito con textos sobre temas de todo tipo [...] e todo o que vai xurdindo váinolo explicando e bastante ben...” (int. 1); “métodos adecuados son precisamente os de meter as palabras no contexto. Non só darnos o listado, senón darnos una aplicación práctica [...] o seu uso concreto e como se usaban...” (int. 50) or “Ensina as cousas en contexto: A través do contexto vemos o que pode significar” (int. 84).

Likewise, the other technique widely commended by learners was that based on the practice of the new terms in different contexts or situations, either in writing or orally, as shown in their own words: “...falamos incluso en conversa bastantes temas [...] creo que se sabes a palabras e non as usas porque no estás segura [...] non sei eu...” (int. 1); “dinos como se pode usar, danos pistas para poder utilizala logo...” (int. 14); “máis que mandarche aprender vocabulario, métecho en práctica e entón eu creo que non che resulta tan pesado. Quédaseche máis fácil, resulta máis ameno” (int. 41); “en un entorno más bien informal, ella hacía que entablásemos conversaciones [...] Es decir, no nos decía vocabulario suelto, más bien nos enseña a usar vocabulario en un entorno informal” (int. 56); “Tiñamos que discutir, entrevistas ou preguntas, conversación máis que nada [...]. Plantarse diante do libro e poñerse a estudar vocabulario é aburrido, hai que

aprender o vocabulario e saber cando utilizalo” (int. 73) or “o que imos facer é falar intentando utilizar esas formas. Ao utilizalas, vánseche quedando” (int. 110).

The third technique most highly reported as positive (16%) was that of presenting new terms in semantic fields, instead of in isolation. Interviewees wanted teachers to draw links between lexical items:

- ◆ according to the grammatical category of words: (“Preséntanolo por grupos, os adxectivos...” – int. 8);
- ◆ according to topics: computers (“agora estamos no grupo dos ordenadores e vainos dicindo todo o vocabulario dos ordenadores” – interview 17), animals (“dinos animais e temos que ir dicindo un animal cada un e cousas así” – int. 48), etc.
- ◆ according to spelling, i.e., prefixes and suffixes: (“palabras dunha mesma raíz, porque [...] necesitamos saber sufixos e prefixos na formación de palabras”- int. 99)
- ◆ according to semantic connections, i.e., synonyms, antonyms...: (“cada vez que sale una palabra nueva proporciona a maiores palabras que están relacionadas con ella, sinónimos, antónimos...” – int. 101)

The other technique regarding contextualised teaching is concerned with providing learners with varied examples and situations where the new terms can be used; this is mentioned by 9% of these sample subjects. Most of them consider these instance contexts as crucial to facilitate word assimilation, as in “conforme che di o significado desa palabra pois tamén che dá exemplos para poder entendela mellor na casa” (int. 19); “Nos lo enseña de forma didáctica con

ejemplos [...], con expresiones” (int. 54) or “Pon exemplos dos contextos nos que se utilizaría a palabra” (int. 82).

Apart from the aforementioned techniques, 6% of the students believe that doing specific vocabulary exercises is a good way of increasing their lexical competence because it provides instances and contexts of use. Thus, some expressed their preference for exercises as something practical: “Parece que sentar diante dunha lista de vocabulario, creo que non lle gusta a ninguén. Eu penso que por medio de exercicios é a maneira. Algo máis práctico” (int. 92). Others specify the type of exercise they like, such as gap-filling ones: “aprendemos unha serie de frases e exercicios onde hai un oco e nós temos que ir completando coas palabras [...]. Creo que che queda mellor cunha frase que cunha palabras solta” (int. 15).

At the other end of the continuum, we find the techniques which are reported less frequently (3% of the interviewees); the following can be mentioned. Two of these are also related to learning in context: teaching how to infer the meaning of unknown terms by using context clues and extensive reading. The former is supported by some of them as a good way of assimilating new words, instead of an overuse of the dictionary: “Ensínanos a que tentemos adiviñar o significado sen recorrer ao dicionario [...] porque o dicionario é interesante pero hasta certo punto [...]. Ademais, ao pensar sobre a palabra despois xa tamén despois cho fai recordar mellor cando volve aparecer de novo” (int. 3) or “Non nolo dá así directamente. Mándanolo sacar ela polo contexto” (int. 6). Reading is also seen as an effective method to gain lexical improvement; some learners stated that

teachers should encourage reading in class, as in “nos obriga a ler textos e non a aprendernos o vocabulario” (int. 10); “Facéndonos ler libros ou lendo na clase algún artigo...” (int. 100) or “Sobre todo o uso de lecturas para poder ir collendo máis vocabulario e tamén atender ás dúbidas que puidera ter o alumnado” (int. 114).

A similar percentage of individuals (3%) alluded to the technique of using English as the language of communication in class which could be regarded as a source of vocabulary learning. They consider that by being exposed to the target language they will improve their lexical competence, for example: “Ten unha maneira diferente de dar clase [...]. Nos anos pasados non me falaban inglés, en cambio con ela o pouco tempo que levo penso que aprendín moito máis [...]. É bastante importante porque aínda que non coñezas todas as palabras, sempre colles algo” (int. 13) or “En vez de decirte lo que significa la palabra en nuestro idioma, el profesor nos lo explica con gestos pero todo en inglés. Lo entiendes mejor” (int. 26). Some others (3%) focused on phonetic aspects to describe what they considered good teaching practice, as shown in “Sobre todo lo enfoca a la pronunciación de las palabras” (int. 9) or “Se para bastante en la pronunciación [...] considero que es bastante importante porque compruebo que a veces escuchando a otra gente que no la tiene tan buena me es difícil entenderla” (int. 77). The same percentage applied to those who pointed to adapting vocabulary to students’ needs as a correct teaching method, as exemplified in “deben agrupalo e buscar temas que sexan realmente útiles [...] non desfasado ou fóra de lugar” (int. 90), “Nos enseña cosas de hoy en día en Inglaterra. La jerga de hoy en día [...]

pues no mucha gente te enseña” (int. 63) or the case of one student (int. 18) whose only aim was to pass the English exam: he considered that his teacher fulfilled his expectations when focusing exclusively on vocabulary required for the exam.

The three following teaching techniques were acknowledged by an even lower number of subjects (2%), namely, the use of audiovisual materials and new technologies (slides, films or songs); the use of diagrams and sketches and, curiously enough, the use of word lists. The latter clearly goes against the opinion of the vast majority of learners because, as we will see later on, employing lists of words was clearly rejected as a “correct” teaching method.

Finally, some other techniques were also mentioned by 1% of our sample, such as teaching vocabulary in a ludic way through games or even focusing on word-formation.

8.2. Negative teaching techniques

As previously explained, among the group of learners who were not satisfied with the way they were being taught English vocabulary (34%), there was one teaching practice sharply criticized by almost half of this group of students (45%): the creation of word lists with the purpose of memorising them (Figure 48).

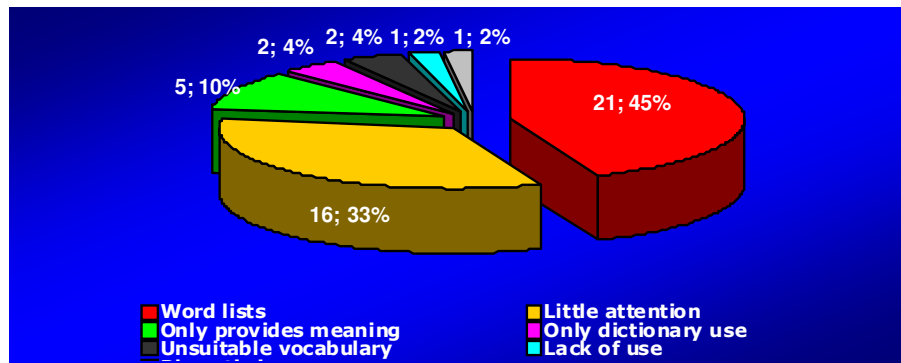


Figure 48: Teaching strategies labelled as “negative” by students

Indeed, this was widely pointed out as a negative teaching practice by many of them and, curiously enough, among the group of learners who liked the way of teaching shown by their teachers, a great deal of them mentioned using list of words as a paradigm of what should not be done. Thus, there were multiple voices against this technique, such as “Danos unha lista e dinos: estudade este vocabulario e xa está” (int. 16); “Es lo de siempre: os estudiáis el vocabulario y no se le da ninguna importancia. Es que así el trabajo es todo tuyo, llegas a casa y te lo chapas tú todo...” (int. 29); “Manda chapar o libro nada máis. Non ensina textos nin nada” (int. 46); “Sempre nos mandaban memorizar as palabras directamente. Tampouco creo que sexa a maneira máis axeitada porque é bastante pesado” (int. 88) or “Moitos deles daban listas de vocabulario e creo que así é imposible. Aprendes as listas para o exame, que non é difícil, pero despois esqueceste” (int. 96), just to mention some.

Following this, 33% of learners maintained that teaching vocabulary was neglected in class. They considered that little attention was being paid to this area and felt really overwhelmed since it is a hard work to do on one’s own, as quoted

in “Non se detén a explicar, simplemente o vemos un día e di só aquel que lle parece difícil. Non se centra en explicalo” (int 22); “Céntrase na gramática e pasa moi por riba o vocabulario [...] eu porque tomo notas en clase de vocabulario pero outra xente que non o fai nunca o vai estudar” (int 27), “No que é vocabulario dao sempre por sabido. Cre que todos temos un nivel moi alto e non é así [...] Co vocabulario fíxase pero pasa páxina moi rápido” (int 32); “A maioría dos profesores dicíanche que se non entendías algo o buscases no dicionario. Tampouco se mataban a explicarche” (int 97) or “Eu penso que eles nos deixan a nós o tema do vocabulario” (int 115).

A fewer number of learners (10%) did not like to be provided with the meaning or translation of the word directly without any further explanation by their teachers. They stated that this was not the right way to do it because if they were not taught how to use them, they would certainly forget these new terms later on: “Somentes dá o significado. Non especifica os diferentes significados que pode ter [...] o que é realmente aprender e non a aprobar” (int 23); “Estás lendo un texto e diche o significado pero non che contextualiza un pouco para que a ti che quede un pouco mellor, nin che dá outros exemplos para que se che grave mellor” (int 42); “O único que fai é darche a tradución e eu así sempre me esquezo” (int 43) or “Basicamente a través da tradución. Era moi aburrido e realmente non aprendía moito” (int 113).

Then, some other students (4%) described two different techniques as examples of bad practice. On the one hand, they pointed out that teachers did not adapt the lexicon to their students’ needs, what made them feel uninterested or

even frustrated, as confirmed in “Porque nos daba demasiado vocabulario que para nós precisamente non nos é útil. O normal é que che ensine vocabulario que che sexa útil” (int 68) or “Cousas básicas que debíamos coñecer non as coñecemos e ao mellor coñecemos cousas que a un nativo lle resultan pedantes ou máis formais e vocabulario básico como o da casa pois non temos nin idea. Carecemos do vocabulario básico e temos un vocabulario máis académico” (int 78). On the other hand, others were critical with the technique based on looking up words in a dictionary as the only way of vocabulary learning provided by some teachers, which leads to boredom and apathy, as reflected in “Só se fai buscando no dicionario e acabas por perder o entusiasmo” (int 19) or “Era todo moi técnico e moi teórico. Eu creo que todos os estudantes de inglés nos queixamos do mesmo e pode parecer un complot contra os profesores, pero non. Por exemplo na clase eles o único que facían era ler o texto e despois dicíanche o significado ou mandábanche ir ao dicionario e eu creo que iso nos tempos que estamos é un pouco obsoleto.” (int 112).

Finally, there were two facts criticized by 1% of the subjects. One learner considered that the problem of the current educational system was that students were not taught how to use the new terms, neither orally nor in writing: “Sólo se estudia el inglés de libro y no se le da importancia a la pronunciación. Sólo se centran en escribir correctamente pero frases, ni siquiera se centran en enlazar un texto con sentido ni nada. Se estudia el inglés de libro de toda la vida” (int 74). Moreover, another learner claimed that most teachers do not pronounce words accurately enough, which leads to a complete failure when trying to learn these

terms: “Creo que debería aprender a pronunciar bien en inglés, porque no lo pronuncian bien. Aquí no se pronuncia bien en general” (int 67).

➤ *Open question 9: How should they do it? What is the teacher’s role?*

We decided to go a step further and ask them about the way teachers should carry out this task. The answers elicited are presented below (Figure 49):

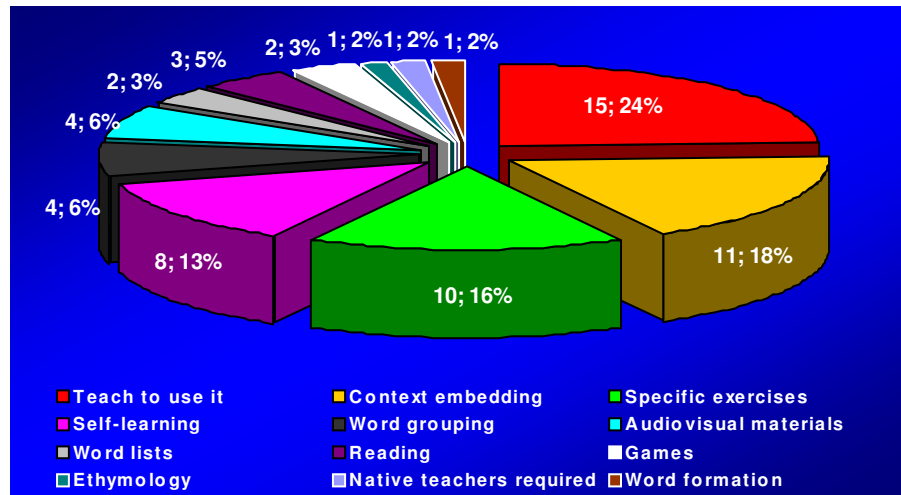


Figure 49: Teacher’s role in EFL vocabulary teaching identified by learners

Taking into account the most frequently mentioned teaching techniques, there were four outstanding ones: teaching how to use vocabulary, using contexts, making use of specific lexical exercises and self-learning.

As for the first one, 24% of the students questioned insisted on the idea that the best way of expanding one’s vocabulary is using these recently learnt terms, either in oral exchanges or in writing. In fact, many of them considered that they lacked oral skills and, consequently, could not communicate properly: “Dedicarlle polo menos unha hora ao mes a falar entre nós. Falar un pouquiño en inglés, dicindo palabras e repetindo uns e outros pois vaise aprendendo” (int 19); “Yo

creo que se deberían tener más conversaciones [...] pero sobre cosas vitales. Proponer un tema [...] no limitarse a poner una cinta o un vídeo y hablar de las palabras que salen ahí [...] dedicar un día a hablar de un tema y sobre eso ir hablando todos un poco e ir aprendiendo vocabulario[...] Creo que esto se aprende hablando y en idiomas es cuestión de repetir y repetir” (int 72); “Creo que las clases deberían ser sobre todo más prácticas [...]Sabemos un montón de gramática y podemos hacer una frase de ocho mil maneras diferentes pero en cambio a la hora de una entrevista en inglés o te vas a vivir a Inglaterra, los españoles somos los únicos europeos que nos quedamos con cara de idiotas y no nos podemos desenvolver bien” (int 74) or “Si lo tienes en una libreta o en una lista, pues lo memorizas pero al no utilizarlo se te olvida, mientras que si te obligasen a utilizarlo en clase se te quedaba mejor” (int 87), just to mention some.

Furthermore, the second most positively rated strategy was that of using different contexts to teach new words. Indeed, many of them (18%) emphasised the idea that when taught within specific contexts, lexical items were easier to understand and to assimilate by foreign learners because they could see different examples of use as well as infer meaning from contextual clues: “Estar máis expostos ao inglés auténtico a traballar bastante máis con textos” (int. 86) or “Supoño que dando textos para que os alumnos lean e despois ensinándolles para que lles sirva de algo” (int. 96).

Doing exercises with the specific aim of learning vocabulary was supported by 16% of subjects who firmly believed that this kind of practice was a positive teaching method: “Creo que deberíamos facer máis exercicios sobre todo escritos

pero tamén orais e se tivese que facer traducións pois que tivese que aplicar o vocabulario” (int. 12); “A nivel básico é importante que busque actividades de encher ocos...” (int. 66) or “Quizais facendo actividades nas que se repita moito, moito o mesmo vocabulario, meténdoo en contexto” (int. 115).

Nevertheless, in spite of all the teaching strategies mentioned, some learners (13%) considered that learning vocabulary was really a matter of self-learning. They stated that students should care about their own learning progress individually and that there is little teachers can do to help them, as quoted in “Creo que tampoco es su trabajo [...] Si en unos textos se dan varias palabras y la mayoría de la gente no las conoce pues esas mismas personas deberían buscar el vocabulario y en la siguiente clase utilizarlas...” (int. 91); “Eu creo que iso é máis labor do alumno que do profesor [...] Realmente dende o punto de vista do profesor é moi difícil. O profesor creo que non pode facer moito máis que darche unha explicación o máis concreta posible pero se despois o alumno non traballa pos si mesmo...” (int. 104) or “Eu creo que iso é cuestión de cada un. Ao mellor con gramática pódénche axudar co que ti non entendes pero co vocabulario, se ti non te preocupas tampouco creo que poidan facer moito.” (int. 115).

The aforementioned strategies were the most commonly reported. However, there was a series of techniques also mentioned by learners, although by a lower number of them. Word grouping and using audiovisual materials were the first most common (6%).

Students considered that teachers should present new vocabulary items organised in groups according to their semantic field rather than in isolation. They

argued that grouping lexical items around different topics or situations would facilitate their assimilation to a higher extent, “Eu penso que unha cousa que se podería facer é tratar de seleccionar campos, por exemplo, como fan os libros de texto pero máis sistemático, porque ás veces é algo moi disperso. Agrupar o vocabulario por campos, por situación, para poder relacionar as palabras que teñan que ver entre si dalgunha maneira.” (int. 59); “Ver o vocabulario segundo a temática está ben. Por exemplo, vocabulario dun hospital, creo que é máis sinxelo despois para memorizar se sabes a que unidade pertence esa palabras” (int. 81) or “Se hoxe, por exemplo, falamos da comida, pois buscar cousas que estean relacionadas co comida ou con ese grupo de palabras e facilitar o vocabulario necesario” (int. 98).

As for audiovisual materials, they emphasised the idea that watching films, listening to songs or even simply visual drawings are tools that enhance vocabulary learning, as mentioned in “Eu creo que as cousas visuais axudan a entrar máis na xente entón ver películas e debater sobre as palabras difíciles sería quizais máis ameno e incluso entraría con máis facilidade. Oes a palabra e ao mesmo tempo estás vendo a situación na que se está empregando esa palabra. Os medios audiovisuais serían máis efectivos” (int. 75); “Realmente a min gustábame moito como nos ensinaba vocabulario o profesor que tiñamos en primeiro porque nos daba láminas con debuxos co nome das cousas” (int. 76) or “As películas ao principio custa moita velas en inglés en versión orixinal pero cos subtítulos axúdache [...] Así é moito máis fácil aprender vocabulario” (int. 108).

Reading was claimed to be the best way of expanding lexical competence by 5% of the subjects interviewed, who acknowledged this way of learning as the secret of their success: “Ler moito e sacar palabras polo contexto [...] eu penso que lendo moito aprendes moito” (int. 93) or “Facerte ler libros que gusten ou que te enganchen [...] Hai libros en inglés moi amenos [...] simplemente best sellers, por exemplo que te enganchan. Non será boa literatura pero ao final aprendes vocabulario que é o importante” (int. 108).

Other suggested methods were using games, focusing on word formation or providing students with lists of words; this was reported by 3% of the students. Games were considered to be a very useful instruction technique which facilitate language learning: “É difícil pero aínda que poida parecer tonto incluso ás persoas maiores lles gusta xogar, entón podería facerse algún xogo pedagóxico ou un role-play que tan de moda está” (int. 112). Curiously enough, the latter was roughly blasted by interviewees although still considered as valid by others as reflected in “Pues pasarnos una lista con el vocabulario que hemos visto y el vocabulario más importante y como se usa” (int. 47) or “Obrigarnos a que fagamos una libreta para apuntar todas as palabras do vocabulario para estudar máis adiante” (int. 71).

Finally, several other teaching techniques were also mentioned by 2% of the learners questioned. One of the students interviewed argued that focusing on the origins of particular words could be helpful to learn new terms (“Eu creo que ás veces pode axudar que che indiquen a orixe dunha palabra, a etimoloxía, a relación con outros conceptos” – int. 53). Another student claimed to place emphasis on prefixes and suffixes, that is, to study how words are formed is very

important to increase students' lexical competence, "Empregar un pouco máis como se forman as palabras, por exemplo, explicar que un sufixo se emprega para formar substantivos, porque a partir dunha palabra podes crear toda a rede de substantivos, adxectivos..." (int. 94).

It is quite surprising that one learner considered that only native speakers should teach vocabulary due to the lack of pronunciation skills among non-native teachers. She focused on the importance of pronunciation when learning lexical items and this explains why she attached so much importance to native speakers, "Creo que debería enseñarlo un profesor nativo y se nota mucho la diferencia. Creo que deberían insistir más en la parte del vocabulario porque si lo usan podemos ver cómo se pronuncia correctamente" (int. 67).

➤ *Open question 10: Have you ever heard about the concept of vocabulary learning strategies?*

When asked about whether they were acquainted with the notion of vocabulary learning strategies, the results were crystal clear: the vast majority of the subjects interviewed (66%) had not heard about them. This is a very important finding because it may have relevant implications for EFL vocabulary instruction methods.

Among the group of students who claimed they were acquainted with the notion of learning strategies (34%), there was not one single idea about what we actually meant (Figure 50). Thus, some of them had a professional knowledge of this concept either because they were teachers or simply because they were doing research on this topic. The rest of them tended to provide concrete examples of learning strategies to identify them. Moreover, 16% of them

considered that they were techniques to improve learning, whereas 11% matched learning strategies with study aids. Some others provided specific examples and 4% of the learners identified learning strategies with either storage into memory techniques or drawing outlines; this was mentioned by 3% of the subjects interviewed.

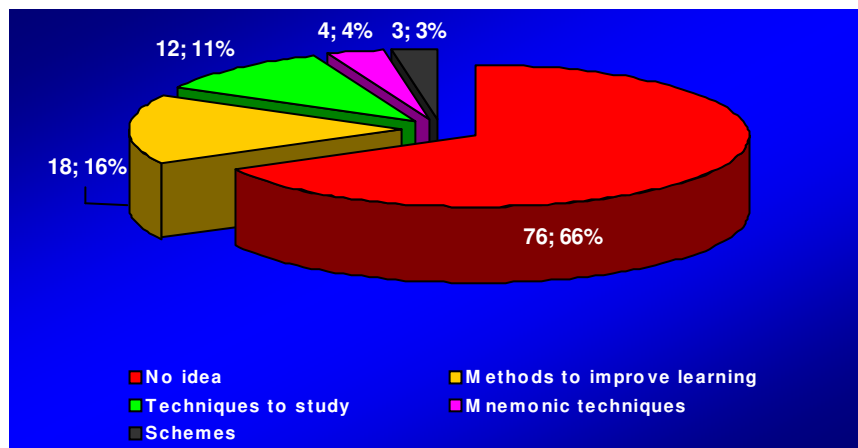


Figure 50: Learners' views on the notion of "learning strategy"

➤ *Open question 11: Do you think learning strategies work?*

Those subjects who gave a positive reply to the previous item were asked about their effectiveness. Again, the answer was definite: an overwhelming majority of them (79%) believed that this kind of strategies improved vocabulary learning. In contrast, 10% of them were not sure about their effectiveness whereas others (7%) thought that some strategies did work but there were some others whose efficiency was not the expected one. Finally, only 5% of the interviewees did not consider these strategies to be useful in the learning process.

The results obtained from this question should be taken into account when designing materials for vocabulary learning.

➤ *Open question 12: Do you think learning strategies should be taught?*

Once they were given a brief explanation on the notion of learning strategies, they were asked their opinions about the suitability of strategy training in regular lessons. The results were very interesting: 90% of students thought that they would like to be trained in the use of learning strategies in their learning of English; this definitely shows that learners are really interested in strategy training.

Conversely, only 10% of them were against this type of instruction in regular classes. There was a wide range of reasons for this: Some of them considered that students should be trained in the use of strategies in specialised didactic sessions but not in the general English lessons, as quoted in “Este tipo de técnicas deberían enseñarse más bien en tutorías o en alternativa a la religión” (int. 20); “Probablemente non sei se lle correspondería en particular ao profesor de inglés. Ao mellor debería ser algo máis xeral” (int. 98) or “Non porque moitas persoas coñecen as técnicas e non teñen por que aburrirse na clase de inglés [...] a clase de inglés hai que estudar inglés só” (int. 102). Others maintain that it is very difficult to train learners in the use of these strategies because each person has to look for the best way of learning but individually, as in “Es que creo que cada uno tiene su técnica. Por mucho que te digan ya acabas encontrando la tuya, no hace falta que nadie te diga cómo” (int. 33); “Yo creo que las técnicas y trucos de aprendizaje tiene que buscarlas cada uno por su cuenta porque el profesor no puede decir: a ti te va mejor este método y a ti este otro. Yo creo que eso es algo muy particular” (int. 47); “Cada un xa ten as súas propias técnicas. Hai xente que

lle van mellor as imaxes, hai xente que as recorda agrupándoas en grupos de determinada forma. Eu penso que cada persoa ten a súa regra.” (int. 55); “Yo creo que esas técnicas son individuales. Entonces no creo que haya una técnica para enseñar. Además, las técnicas no se aprenden en una clase sino que cada uno tiene su forma de interiorizarla y no creo que un profesor pueda enseñarla” (int. 60).

4.2.1.2. Students’ reported use of VLSs

Once learners’ beliefs about the process of lexical acquisition were gathered, they were required to verbalise the procedure they would follow when facing concrete tasks. This was clearly an attempt to elicit those learning strategies most frequently used by learners so as to compare them with the results obtained from the questionnaires.

Thus, the following open questions were conceived as hypothetical situations to find out the meaning of new words (question 13), to store them into memory (question 14), to retrieve them from memory when needed (question 15) and to use them (question 16). Lastly, we were also interested in metacognitive strategies so they were asked whether they regulated their own learning process (what to learn and when – question 17) and whether they restricted themselves only to vocabulary items covered in class or required to pass an exam (question 18). The responses obtained will be put forth below:

➤ *Open question 13: Imagine you come across an unknown word, what would you do to find out its meaning?*

As expected, the reported strategies were consistent with their answers on the survey and they included cognitive strategies, such as guessing techniques, analysing/reasoning procedures, dictionary use and social strategies which involve asking someone more proficient in the target language, either the teacher or one of their classmates:

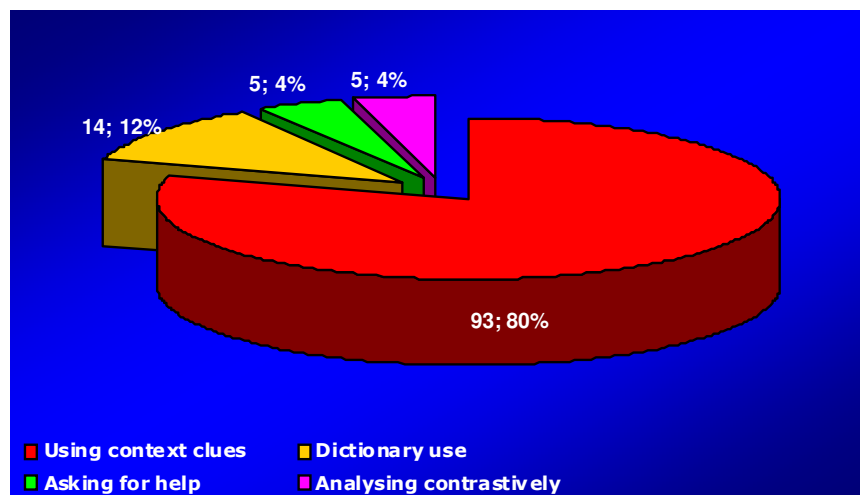


Figure 51: VLSs employed to discover/understand word meaning

The most frequently used technique was trying to derive the meaning of the new term by means of contextual clues, reported by 80% of the learners questioned. In fact, most of them would try to make sense of the sentence or paragraph where the new word is embedded to guess the meaning of the unknown term, as quoted in “Pois dende o último punto ata o outro no que estea metida esa palabra na frase leeríaa varias veces tentando deducir as que están arredor e a partir diso sacaríaa o significado desa” (int. 19); “Primeiro leo a frase e

despois a parte que non entendo intento metela no contexto no que se encontra e illa deducindo aínda que non sexa o significado exacto” (int. 21); “Pues leyendo la frase entera e intentando averiguar el significado que concuerde” (int. 30); “Intento sempre ler sempre dende un pouco antes de que apareza a palabra e buscar algo que me encaixe aí, polo sentido xeral” (int. 42); “Leo o texto en conxunto e procuro ver se me teñen sentido esas palabras que non coñezo” (int. 53) or “Leo o texto en xeral para coller o sentido do texto. Desta maneira deduzo ou interpreto algún significado, aínda que ao mellor non sexa cen por cen exacto, pero collo un pouco o significado completo do texto” (int. 75), just to mention some.

Apart from using context clues to find out the meaning of new words, dictionaries (especially bilingual ones) were tools employed to check their meaning. Here it is necessary to make a remark: a great part of the learners who claimed they derived meaning from the context reported making use of dictionaries to check whether they were right or wrong in their hypotheses. However, the percentage of 12% reflected in Figure 51 applies only to those learners whose learning strategies have nothing to do with using context but employing a dictionary when coming across unknown terms, as quoted in “Primeiro, o dicionario” (int. 40); “Como mi tiempo está bastante contado [...] lo que hago es ir al diccionario” (int. 77); “Pues si tengo un diccionario a mano me voy al diccionario, al bilingüe; no me lo pienso” (int. 87); “Eu utilizo un dicionario electrónico que é máis rápido” (int. 102) or “Seguramente la buscaría en un diccionario bilingüe directamente” (int. 103).

Other subjects, 4% to be more exact, were completely reliant on someone else's knowledge, namely their teacher or native speakers, and in some cases they preferred to do this instead of trying out an autonomous way of learning, in "Pois chamaría á profesora e preguntarlle" (int. 36); "Se está o profesor ao lado pois xa lle pregunto a el" (int. 40); "Primeiro preguntolle ao profesor" (41); "Primeiro preguntarlle ao meu profesor" (int. 49); "Se estou na clase preguntar ao profesor se me pode axudar" (int. 90) or "Procuo estar na compañía dun falante nativo e apunto as palabras para cando veña preguntarlle" (int. 102).

Lastly, the same percentage of learners (4%) was prone to analysing unknown words in order to understand their meaning. Thus, they examine target words to determine the likeness in comparison with one's own or other known languages, as explained in "El inglés está muy influenciado por otras lenguas y si tiene alguna raíz latina pues ver si corresponde con la lengua latina" (int. 9); "Primeiro penso na orixe da palabra, nas similitudes con outras palabras" (int. 12); "Buscando as palabras que signifiquen o mesmo, quero dicir, que teñan a mesma raíz. Tamén estudei latín e grego e entón moitas veces coinciden e entón ás veces sácanse" (int. 27); "Miro se teñen algunha similitude con outro idioma co que poida asócialo ou que a súa raíz teña algo que ver con algunha palabra que coñeza" (int. 76); "Tento averiguar se a palabra como substantivo, como adxectivo, e tamén igual polos sufixos ou os prefixos podo intentar saber o que significa" (int. 96) or "Ver si tienen alguna parte del étimo que me suene a otra palabra, para establecer vínculos a través de ese étimo" (int. 101).

➤ *Open question 14: Imagine you want to store these recently learnt terms into your memory, what would you do?*

The answers elicited from this question show that the vast majority of students resorted to a varied set of storage into memory strategies to keep new words in their memory (Figure 52).

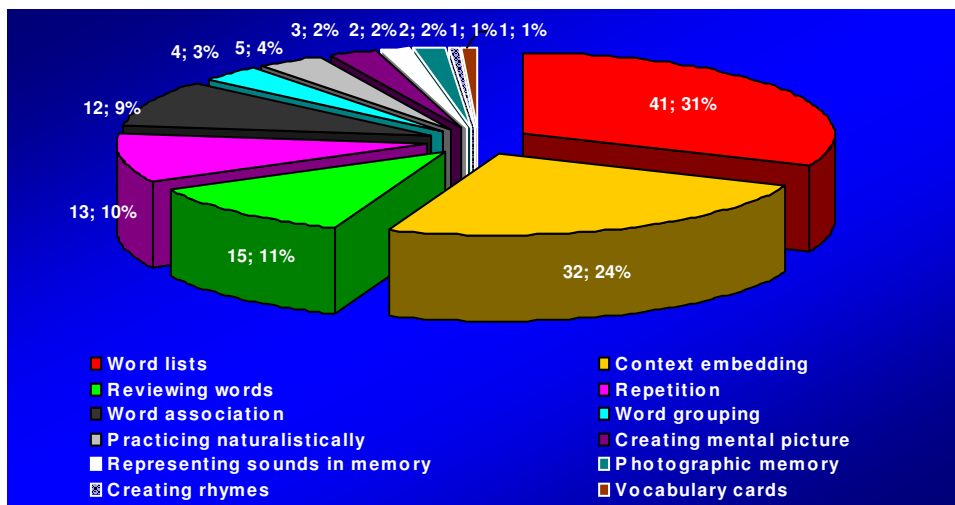


Figure 52: VLSs employed to store words into memory

Thus, among the set of storage into memory strategies, there is a group of techniques involving the creation of mental linkages. The first of them is word grouping (3%), that is, classifying words in meaningful groups by conceptual similarities, by grammatical category, by word spelling, etc., as in “Trato de agrupalas ou porque teñan un significado parecido ou porque pertencen a un campo semántico igual. Trato de memorizalas” (int. 42) or “Organizando dalgunha maneira por familia léxica ou pola forma da palabra” (int. 93). The second strategy, reported by 9% of the students interviewed, is associating new terms with familiar concepts already stored into their memory, especially resorting to mother tongue lexicon, as reflected in “Intento identificala con algo, unha palabra

que se pareza ao castelán” (int. 6); “Intento asociar palabras que se parezan en como se escriben” (int. 8); “Si fuese un objeto trataría de asociar ese objeto en mi idioma y en inglés” (int. 9); “Intento relacionar lo que ya conozco en inglés” (int. 74); “Buscando más palabras que tengan relación [...] La relaciono con palabras de mi propia lengua y de la lengua que estoy estudiando” (int. 85). Finally, 24% of interviewees claimed to place new words into a meaningful context so as to remember them, as quoted in “Ás veces, pero menos, acostumo a poñelas en varias frases” (int. 10); “Collería esa pequena frase onde estaba, relacionaría con outra que puidese facer eu” (int. 15); “Fabricar frases con esa palabra” (int. 46); “Éme máis fácil memorizar unha frase que esa palabra soa” (int. 51); “Trato de dicir unha frase coa palabra dentro ou imaxino unha situación” (int. 52); “Intentar poñelas nunha frase para acordarme, nun contexto concreto” (int. 62); “Si hubiera una frase que se me pueda quedar fácilmente, con la frase ya me ayuda a recordar esa palabra” (int. 91), just to mention some.

The second set of strategies within storage into memory ones entails the application of images and sounds, for instance, when dealing with images, it may refer to both creating a mental picture of the new term (2%), as quoted in “Intentar asociala a un obxecto en español que xa coñezo” (int. 17); “Imaginándome el objeto en castellano” (int. 24) or “Asócioa cunha imaxe mental que fago do texto” (int. 100), and remembering a written item by creating a “photographic” picture in one’s memory of the place where it is located (2%), as recorded in “A verdade é que para algunhas palabras teño memoria fotográfica. Ao mellor vexo unha palabra e acórdome que a vin naquel lado” (int. 21) or “Eu

teño moita memoria fotográfica e acórdome da situación da palabra dentro da páxina” (int. 68).

Furthermore, as far as sounds are concerned, 2% of the learners interviewed claimed they remembered words by making auditory representations of them. They generally link new terms with familiar sounds or words according to the way they are pronounced and this helps recall them better, in “Fijarme bien en ella y recordarla [...] fijarme en la pronunciación” (int. 25) or “Máis ben en como soa, na pronunciación” (int. 27). Moreover, one of them (1%) claimed to make use of a song (rhymes) to remember new vocabulary items as quoted in “Haría una canción relativa a ella y trataría de memorizarla asociándola con algo parecido en mi propia lengua” (int. 9).

Apart from those, 12% of the subjects questioned review the already learnt words at different intervals in order to recall them: “Para los exámenes cojo todas las palabras del curso anterior y todo y las miro” (int. 29); “Las suelo repasar bastante” (int. 49); “Las veo un día y luego durante el fin de semana suelo repasar esa lista” (int. 54); “Léoaas periodicamente” (int. 57); “Las miraría cada poco tiempo, en función de mis necesidades” (int. 65) or “Revísoas días antes do exame” (int. 107).

The last set of storage into memory strategies involves using mechanical techniques. It is curious to see that one of the strategies included here, i.e. creating lists of words on notebooks or separate sheets was sharply criticized by most of the interviewees; yet it was the most commonly employed strategy of this group; it was in fact reported by 31% of learners, as reflected in the following

quotes: “Pois anotaríaa nun sitio onde a vise ben” (int. 4); “Meteríaa na libreta de vocabulario” (int. 18); “Teño sempre unha libretiña onde apunto sempre o máis importante” (int. 22); “Escribiríaa na lista cun sinónimo en castelán” (int. 28); “Escribireina nunha libreta e xa a iría aprendendo” (int. 44); “Usar os listados de vocabulario que poida e ireinos elaborando pouco a pouco e a través dela iralles botando un ollo de vez en canto” (int. 50); “Escribiéndolas en una lista y repasándolas habitualmente para usarlas en ejercicios” (int. 63); “En una hoja de papel busco la traducción al español e intento relacionar lo que ya conozco en inglés e ir haciendo una lista de palabras sinónimas que ya sé lo que significan” (int. 74); “Faría un glosario pequeno ou algo así” (int. 90); “Escríboa en grande nun folio e cólgoa na parede do cuarto para levantarme e vela todos os días ata que xa estea na memoria” (int. 98). The other mechanical tool is that of employing vocabulary flashcards, one of the students refers to this as follows: “Facerlles fichas ou algo así [...] as fichas de vocabulario de sempre” (int. 88).

Apart from storage into memory strategies, students also reported making use of cognitive strategies that entail practising. On the one hand, repetition, either oral or written, was reported by 10% of the students interviewed, as “Pois repítoa varias veces” (int. 10); “Pois simplemente repetíndoa un par de veces” (int. 12) “Como mínimo repito cada palabra cinco veces” (int. 28); “Repetiríaa varias veces en alto e cando vou repetindo vánseme gravando” (int. 36); “Eu repito moitísimas veces esa palabra [...] pois aprendo esa palabra como se escribe e quédame pola repetición. Incluso a escribo moitísimas veces nun papel” (int. 41); “La memorizo tratando de repetirla en voz alta” (int. 70) or “Escríboas coa transcripción fonética

varias veces e míroas moitas veces” (int. 106). Besides, 5% of learners argued that they kept words in their memories by using them in actual communication, being able to understand and to express themselves both in speaking and in writing, as quoted in “Sobre todo usalo o máximo posible” (int. 50); “Es simplemente a través de la práctica, no chapar, sino a través de la práctica” (int. 56) or “Procuro aplicarlas a cosas que yo suela utilizar” (int. 72).

➤ *Open question 15: What would you do to retrieve vocabulary items from your memory when needed?*

Without doubt, this was the most difficult question to answer; retrieving terms from one’s memory is a complex mental process and it is not easy to verbalise; this may explain why we did not obtain any reply from 8% of the interviewees. However, when students were given some time to think about it, we were able to obtain different answers. As observed in Figure 53, learners claimed they made use of memory strategies to retrieve words quickly in communicative situations. In this light, techniques entailing the creation of mental links were reported, namely, association. Four per cent of the learners interviewed were able to recall learnt words by their association with other terms, either in the target language or in their own language: “Polo parecido da palabra con algunha outra tanto en inglés coma en galego” (int. 5); “Pola palabra do meu idioma á que a asociei” (int. 13); “Pode ser que haxa palabras que asocio do mesmo grupo, vocabulario da comida ou doutra situación” (int. 55) or “Eu sei que hai certas expresións que en español se din dun xeito e en inglés de outro, entón canto maior é a diferenza entre elas, mellor as lembro porque canto máis diferentes, máis sinxelo me é

lembradas” (int. 83). Other students, 7%, made also use of association but they resorted to semantics, especially to the creation of synonym linkages, as reflected in “Pódolle dicir unha parecida, algo que se pareza” (int. 6); “Recurrir a outras palabras que signifiquen lo mismo” (int. 29); or “Busco un sinónimo ou cambio a frase” (int. 93).

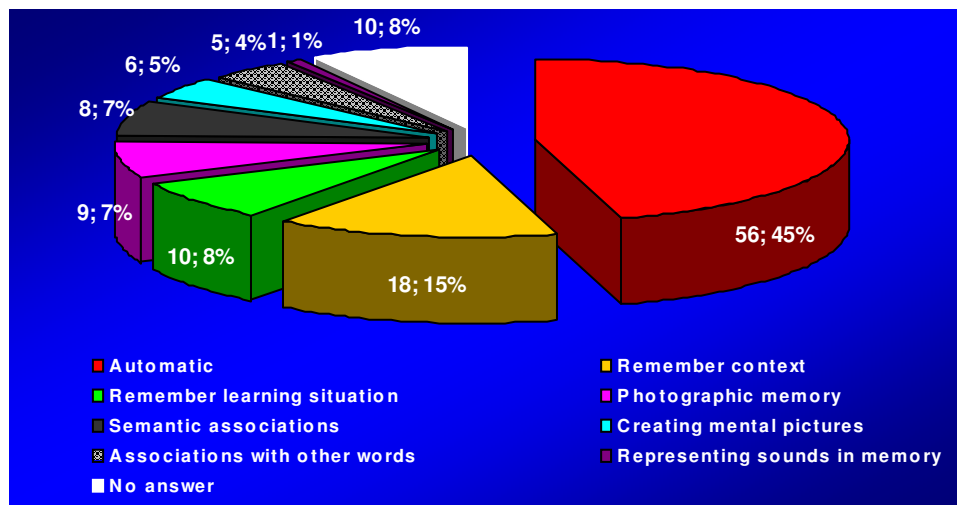


Figure 53: VLSs employed to retrieve words from memory

Moreover, a different type of mental linkage refers to the context where words were embedded; 15% of the students admitted that they were able to recall terms if they could remember the sentence where they learnt them: “Supoño que intentar lembrarme do texto enteiro” (int. 1); “Intento recordar onde a oín no texto” (int. 10); “A lo mejor acordarme de la frase en la que aparecía antes” (int. 30); “Si recuerdo el contexto, ya me salen” (int. 58) or “Sempre me vén á cabeza a frase na que as integrei” (int. 69). Likewise, 8% of the interviewees remember precise words by looking back at the concrete moment when they came across those lexical items, as explained in “Probablemente

acordándome de la situación en la que la aprendí” (int. 65); “Procuro pensar na situación na que estaba cando aprendín o vocabulario” (int. 88) or “Intento recordar a situación na que a vin por primeira vez” (int. 113).

Apart from creating mental linkages, interviewees also applied images and sounds to recall already stored material. Thus, 5% of them remember a mental picture of the words when facing a communicative situation, as in “La asociación mental me saldría automáticamente si previamente la hubiera machacado” (int. 9); “Recordar a imaxe mental e así xa me vén á memoria” (int. 17) or “Por la memoria visual, pues pienso en el objeto que imaginé y ya me sale” (int. 24). Moreover, some others (7%) resort to “photographic” memory by imagining the place where words are located on the page, as quoted in “Acostumo a recordar as palabras pola páxina, se estaba arriba ou abaixo” (int. 19); “A mí lo que se me da bien es la memoria fotográfica. Entonces si he visto esa palabra escrita en un papel o donde sea [...] creo que me acordaría” (int. 47); “Lo de localizarla en la página lo suelo utilizar mucho” (int. 87) or “Creo que teño memoria fotográfica, recordo onde estaba situada” (int. 109). Finally, one of the students (1%) reported recalling words by the way she had represented its sound in her memory, as explained in “Sempre no ton de voz distinto” (int. 36).

Nevertheless, despite the aforementioned strategies, a large group of students (45%) were not aware of resorting to any kind of strategies; they thought that retrieval from memory was something automatic, as quoted in “Normalmente xa me sae automaticamente porque a teño memorizada” (int. 22); “Se a sei, sairíame, se non, xa non me sairía” (int. 48); “Se a teño na memoria, dígoa sen

problemas, automáticamente” (int. 52); “No tengo idea de cómo me salen las palabras cuando tengo que empezar una conversación en inglés. La palabra que utilizo normalmente es la palabra que está en mi vocabulario básico” (int. 60) or “È que a min a lingua sáeme automáticamente” (int. 73).

➤ *Open question 16: What would you do to use these vocabulary items you are learning?*

Students were also required to tell whether they made use of the lexicon they were learning outside the English classroom and what were their main activities. Roughly speaking, there were three types of strategies employed by students to use and practice the learnt vocabulary: using already learnt terms to understand target language materials (35%), using lexicon to communicate (43%) and, lastly, finding any opportunity to employ and consolidate vocabulary (8%). It is also surprising to verify that 13% of interviewees confessed they did not use FL terms at all outside the classroom, as shown in Figure 54.

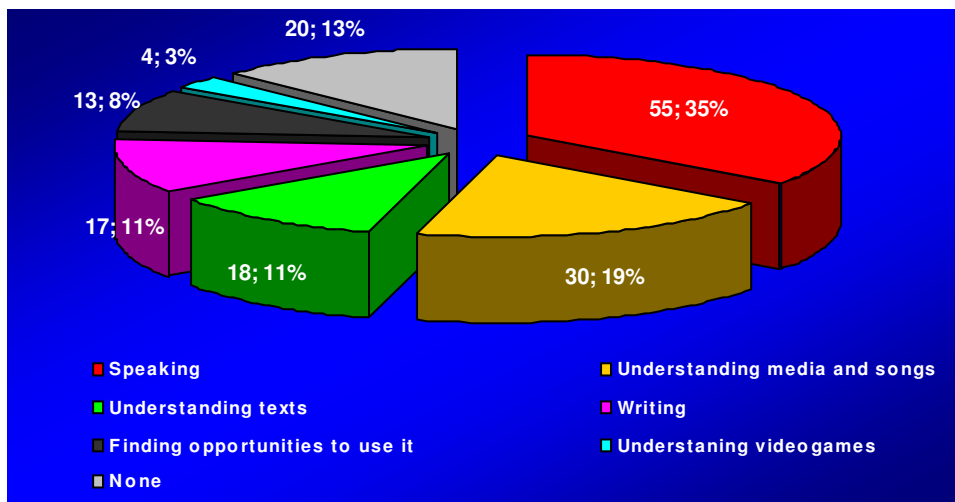


Figure 54: VLSs employed to use already learnt words

As for the first group, learners resorted to their acquired lexical competence in order to understand FL materials, especially authentic ones. Three different uses were shown here: 19% of them claimed they employed vocabulary items so as to be able to understand audiovisual materials, such as films, TV programmes, songs and so on, as quoted in “Hai cancións en inglés nas que intento asociar as palabras porque me sonan de algo. Tamén cando saen os diálogos na televisión” (int. 6); “Vexo películas subtituladas” (int. 17); “También cuando escucho canciones, para entender lo que dicen” (int. 25); “Normalmente a maioría das palabras do vocabulario que me manda sácoo por cancións” (int. 38) or “Utilízoo por exemplo para escoitar películas [...] tamén para ver calquera cousa que sae na televisión” (int. 59), just to mention some examples.

Reading texts in English, either in printed form or online, was reported by 11% of students; they found it very useful for the learning of new words: “Se les algún artigo dunha revista que estea en inglés ou cartas en inglés ou internet” (int. 42); “Lo que procuro es leer libros, novelas o libros de cualquier cosa” (int. 72); “Prefiero leer libros en inglés” (int. 87); “Consulto un xornal online que está en inglés” (int. 88) or “Gústame coller libros da biblioteca aínda que non nos manden ler e léoos polo gusto de sentir que son capaz de entendelos” (int. 106).

A smaller number of students (3%) were prone to playing videogames; knowing many vocabulary items helped them understand their instructions better, as in “Nos videoxogos si, pero nos videoxogos é un vocabulario moi específico” (int. 11) or “Para instalar un xogo porque ás veces as instrucións están en inglés” (int. 40).

As for the second group of strategies, students engaged in the use of the acquired target language lexicon so as to communicate. This set was the most frequently employed, when learners produced messages in the new language, both in speaking and in writing. Thus, 35% of them (the highest percentage) claimed to rehearse vocabulary in oral exchanges: “Cuando suelo viajar utilizo el vocabulario” (int. 9); “Cando falo con xente en inglés gústame empregar o vocabulario que se dá na clase” (int. 23); “Por exemplo cando falo cos amigos que teño alí en Irlanda” (int. 27); “Porque facemos viaxes internacionais co equipo de fútbol e cando saio éme moi importante para falar” (int. 46); “Cando estiven de ERASMUS, moitas palabras que utilizaba habitualmente xa as aprenderá na clase” (int. 86) or “Houbo unha época na que falaba moito por internet e aproveitaba para empregar as palabras que estaba aprendendo e así poder memorizalas” (int. 94). Moreover, 11% of interviewees resorted to their lexical storage to produce written texts in the shape of a composition or a message (letters, e-mails...), as illustrated in “Pois cando elaboro textos intento utilizar esas palabras para non esquecerme” (int. 4); “Tamén á hora de facer redaccións ou de facer escritos, procuro empregar ese vocabulario novo” (int. 53); “Ás veces teño conversas en inglés por Internet con xente que coñezo de fóra” (in. 61); “Cando teño que facer algún essay ou traballo si que procuro utilizar esas palabras” (int. 68) or “Escríbome por e-mail con xente que coñezo de Inglaterra ou de EEUU” (in. 112).

Lastly, the third kind of technique is rather different in nature from the aforementioned ones, that is, seeking practice opportunities, does not involve dealing with the target language directly. On the contrary, it is a metacognitive

strategy by means of which students arrange and plan their own learning process. Eight per cent of them seek out opportunities to practise the target language vocabulary, as explained in “Trato de usalo o máximo possible e trato de fixarme nas situacións e usala para non esquecerme dela” (int. 50); “Para min iso é o máis importante porque cando non o uso hai moitas cousas das que non me lembro e esqueceseme” (int. 55); “Sobre todo o vocabulario que me parece interesante e necesario para os niveis que eu aprendo ou para circunstancias nas que me vexo envolta” (int. 66); “Si puedo utilizarlo, lo hago. Lo utilizo a todos los niveles” (int. 80) or “Procuro utilizarlo muy a menudo hasta que me salga automáticamente” (int. 91).

➤ *Open question 17: Do you regulate or plan your own vocabulary learning process?*

When inquired about their use of indirect strategies, such as the metacognitive ones to learn vocabulary, the most widely varying scores were achieved. The interview data for these subjects do highlight that the vast majority of them are not concerned with regulating or planning vocabulary learning. Seventy-eight per cent of the subjects interviewed maintained this position; in contrast, only twenty-two per cent of them answered affirmatively.

This fact together with the low scores presented in the previous metacognitive strategy of seeking opportunities for practice should be taken into account when designing teaching methods. The relevance of metacognitive strategies has been supported by O'Malley *et al.* (1985a) and by Anderson (2002), who emphasised

the importance of developing metacognitive awareness in our learners as a way to reinforce stronger cognitive skills and better learning progress.

➤ *Open question 18: Do you restrict yourself to the vocabulary items taught by your teacher or do you have additional sources of information?*

This final question also belongs to the group of metacognitive strategies and is aimed at finding out if learners are either autonomous in setting their own learning goals or focus only on what teachers can teach them. Thus, we want to know whether they restrict themselves to the target language lexicon covered in class or, on the contrary, they make use of other sources to develop their lexical competence.

The results obtained were conclusive: only 25% of interviewees reported being completely dependent on the vocabulary taught by their teachers whilst 75% of learners claimed their own autonomy in the process of vocabulary learning since they resorted to varied sources so as to expand their EFL lexicon. Thus, they mentioned reading books, the mass media, the Internet and so on: “Yo voy a clase simplemente para practicar y leo libros y utilizo internet, artículos de medicina y ahí se va adquiriendo vocabulario” (Int. 9); “Si, sempre cancións en inglés” (Int. 16), “Si, por exemplo cando as vexo na televisión” (Int. 44); “Tamén estudo o vocabulario que sae en cancións” (Int. 45); “Acostumo a ler libros [...] incluso en películas ou na prensa ou na televisión” (Int. 51); “Me centro en lo que vimos en clase porque sé que van a caer ejercicios que vimos en clase pero luego trato también de buscar otro tipo de material [...] canciones, algo que haya escuchado, el paquete de cualquier cosa que vi el supermercado y que tenía los ingredientes

en inglés, cualquier cosa” (Int. 58); “Yo tengo otros intereses y normalmente no me quedo sólo en lo de clase [...] a mayores leyendo novelas siempre intento sacar otro tipo de vocabulario porque el que nos dan en clase no es suficiente” (Int. 74); “Non me centro só no da clase. O que leo en xornais ou en revistas ou escoito nas películas, todo me interesa” (Int. 93).

➤ *Open question 19: Further remarks or comments*

As explained above, learners were given the chance to add any further comment or explanation about their learning process and 8 interviewees (7%) decided to do so.

Curiously enough, 4 of them (3,5%) sharply criticised our current vocabulary teaching approach, since they considered that it was either boring (“Se cambiaran estes do estudio do vocabulario de opinion [...] Así é moi aburrido e do único que te acordas é para o exame, pero unha vez que o fas xa te esqueces porque ti o que queres é estudar esa lingua para poder usala e non acordarte para o exame” [Int. 10]); too theoretical (“A mi me gustaría que las clases de inglés se hicieran mucho más de práctica para aplicar lo que sabes, no tan plastones” [Int. 29]); ineffective (“Deberían cambiar el sistema de aprendizaje de inglés porque salimos con muy mal nivel de bachillerato” [Int. 87]) or inadequate (“Creo que se debería dar máis vocabulario de formas coloquiais que non veñen nos dicionarios sequera” [Int. 88]). Furthermore, 2 subjects (2%) claimed that they considered our work an interesting research issue: “Me parece interesante este tema” (Int. 64) and one primary school teacher learning EFL: “Cando nos pasastes o cuestionario

pareceume moi interesante [...] porque eu levo o do portfolio en primaria” (Int. 66).

Finally, it was quite encouraging to be thanked by one of the interviewees for carrying out research of this kind (“Grazas a vós por estas cuestións que estades facendo. A ver se se pode facer mellor o ensino” [Int. 19]). Moreover, another learner wanted to praise his English teacher, which is very gratifying for us as EFL instructors (“La verdad es que la profesora es estupenda. Sólo eso” [Int. 56]).

4.2.2. Results of the teachers’ interviews

The interview questions were organised in accordance with the sections in the questionnaire addressed to the students. Once again, the first section consisted of 12 open questions dealing with teachers’ beliefs about lexical acquisition and instruction whereas the second section in the interview sought further in-depth data on teachers’ perceptions about the learning strategies employed by their own students. By means of 6 open questions, teaching professionals were asked to describe those learning strategies employed by their students in the process of EFL vocabulary acquisition. To end with, they were told that any professional remark or opinion about the topic under discussion would be highly appreciated.

4.2.2.1. Teachers’ beliefs about vocabulary

The 12 questions included in the first section of the interview aimed to investigate teachers’ attitudes towards vocabulary teaching and learning. Just as was the case in the learners’ interviews, the answers elicited from 27 subjects will be presented here, being illustrated with clarifying quotations directly taken from each interview.

➤ *Open question 1: Do you think that your students like studying English vocabulary?*

This question sought to find out the overall impression of teachers about their students' degree of liking or not liking English vocabulary. The results show that they were quite pessimistic about their students' enthusiasm for the foreign language (51.9%), as reflected in "Non lles gusta nada. De feito moitas veces pasan del e iso que nós sempre lles poñemos unha pregunta que vale como mínimo o 20% e aínda así pasan" (Int. 7) or "Creo que lo hacen básicamente porque tienen que hacerlo" (Int. 16). On the contrary, 37% of the subjects thought that they liked it, in "I think they realize now more and more that vocabulary is the key rather than knowledge of structure and grammar" (Int. 11). Lastly, a third group (11.1%) believed that learners' liking or disliking English lexicon was mostly dependent on the teaching approach, pointing out the traditional methods as the main cause for them to dislike EFL vocabulary. In other words, they accept their own responsibility in making learners appreciate this language area: "Estudar listas de vocabulario é pesado. Agora, aprender vocabulario nunha unidade didáctica non debería. Depende de como se formule didacticamente" (Int. 9)

➤ *Open question 2: In your opinion, why do they study English vocabulary?*

It was also interesting to know students' motivations to study EFL lexicon from their teachers' point of view. The results in Figure 55 show that the participants reported a total of seven reasons. In accordance with the main opinion obtained in the previous question, that is, students' dislike for the studying of English vocabulary, most of the teachers interviewed (34%) think that learners study

lexicon only to pass exams, as in “La mayoría de ellos lo hacen puntualmente para exámenes” (Int. 1); “Creo que é máis ben un tema de saber palabras para aprobar o exame que saber palabras para poder defenderse no idioma” (Int. 4); “O lo estudian para un examen porque quieren sacar nota o no lo estudian” (Int. 15); “Estúdano porque saben que o necesitan para poder seguir as leccións e logo facer o exame” (Int. 24). Besides, 15% of the subjects of the sample also show this negative view when they claim that students only take new words into account because it is a compulsory part of the study of the FL and they have to do it whether they like it or not, in “Eu creo que o estudan porque se ven forzados, non porque lles guste” (Int. 7) or “Porque lles dis que lles vas preguntar nun exame, baixo coacción porque de motu propio, nada” (Int. 21). Conversely, there was a group of teachers (27%) who argued that their students learnt English vocabulary to gain more fluency in the FL, especially in oral interactions: “Le interesa conocer cómo se dicen ciertas palabras en otra lengua y después utilizarlas cuando tienen oportunidad de hacerlo” (Int. 2); “Supongo que adquirir cuanto más nivel de vocabulario mejor para luego poderse expresar con más precisión, tanto escrita como oral” (Int. 8); “To get some fluency and not be searching for words, not to stop and hesitate so that they get the words they need” (Int. 11).

Finally, four of these teachers mentioned three different reasons to study EFL words: either to understand texts in English (8%), as quoted in “Principalmente porque queren saber todo o que se está dicindo nun texto” (Int. 22); due to professional reasons, that is, to find a good job in the future (4%), in “Pois desde necesidades laborais ou para buscar traballo” (Int. 23); or because students really

want to broaden their knowledge of the FL (4%). Interestingly enough, 8% of our teachers could not provide an answer to the question posed.

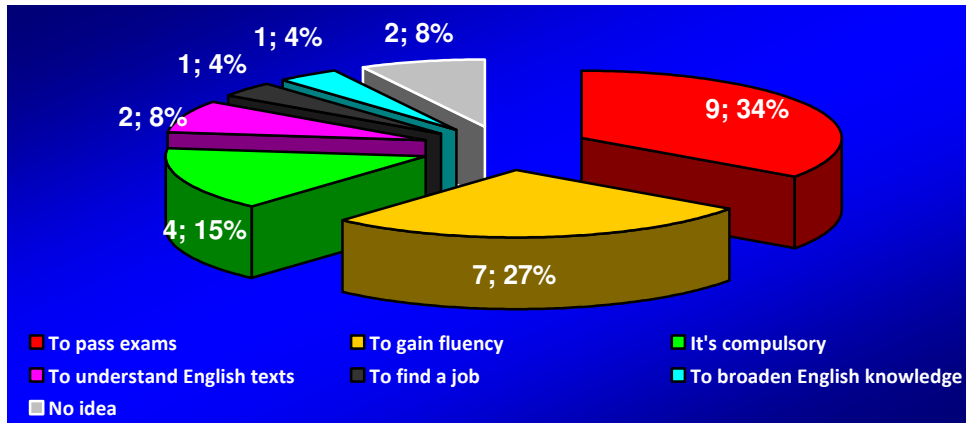


Figure 55: Teachers' ideas about students' reasons for learning EFL vocabulary

➤ *Open question 3: Do you think that English vocabulary is difficult to learn?*

Another aspect worth investigating was the teachers' opinion about the difficulty of learning English lexicon. Based on the results obtained, this learning process was ranked by the majority of the participants (63%) as an easy task, whereas 22.22% of instructors considered it to be intricate. Moreover, four of the subjects interviewed (14.81%) were not so categorical since they claimed that some areas of EFL lexicon are difficult whereas others are not, depending on whether we are dealing with words from Germanic or from Latin origin; one of them even stated that traditional methods make word acquisition harder than modern ones.

It was not enough to know that some instructors claimed that learners have to confront many difficulties in learning English words. We also wanted to find out why they thought so; these were the results obtained (Figure 56): 40% of the instructors believe that learning EFL words is hard because students' mother

tongue and the target language have different origin and their lexical repertoires are very different. However, 30% of subjects thought that the difficulty lied in the large amount of words students have to learn, whereas one of them stated that vocabulary items are easily forgotten if they are not constantly used.

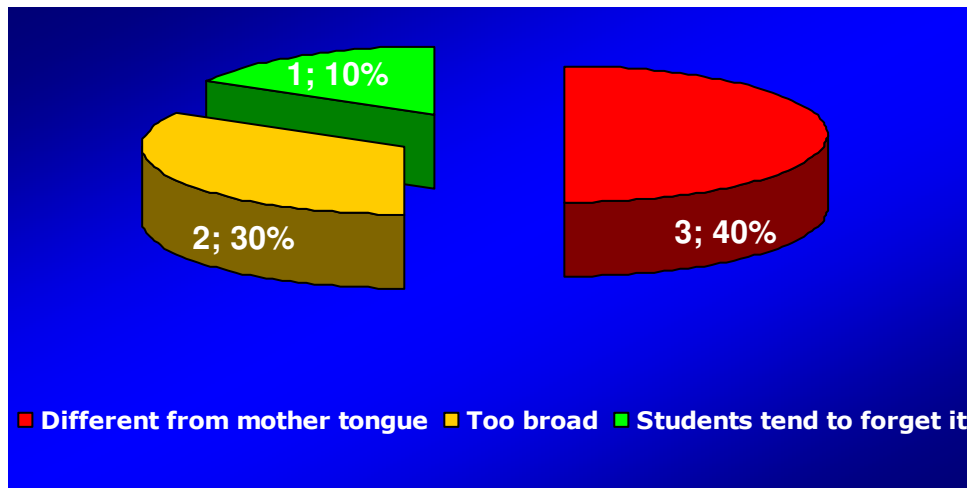


Figure 56: Teachers' ideas about reasons why EFL lexis is difficult to learn

➤ *Open question 4: Once your students finish school, will they have acquired enough vocabulary to express themselves fluently?*

The answers elicited from this question show that most teachers did not think that their students would become fluent speakers of English after their instructional period. However, there was a group of educators (37%) who were optimistic about their disciples' future achievements in the FL. This was exactly the same percentage of interviewees who stated that this question had to be answered taking into account particular learners. They firmly believed that it was difficult to generalise and it was necessary to consider learner's particular characteristics and individual features: "Hay alumnos que son bastante buenos a

todos los niveles, tanto en pronunciación como en retención que sienten interés” (Int. 2), tasks required: “Depende da actividade que fagan” (Int. 10), aptitude: “It depends on individual students. There are students that can do it and others probably will never do it; it’s a question of aptitude” (Int. 11), motivation: “Hai alumnos que teñen unha maior motivación que outros e entón é máis fácil que a súa fluidez sexa tamén mellor” (Int. 14), personal work: “Algunos tienen un nivel muy adecuado para este curso, leen mucho, escuchan mucho la radio o ven la televisión” (Int. 19) or educational level: “Depende de qué nivel estamos hablando: Los de la universidad creo que sí. Un alumno que acaba bachillerato debería tener un nivel para expresarse con fluidez” (Int. 20).

Furthermore, a smaller number of teachers (26%) do not believe their students will acquire the skills to obtain a fair command of English words which may allow them to express fluently in English.

➤ *Open question 5: Do you think that your students are confident in achieving this goal?*

This question is connected with the previous one in order to contrast, on the one hand, teacher’s beliefs about their students’ capacities to achieve a fair command of English vocabulary and, on the other hand, the perceived confidence of students to acquire it.

Roughly speaking, from the instructors’ point of view, students are slightly more pessimistic than their teachers. In other words, most of the teachers (48.1%) argued that their pupils were not confident in achieving the aforementioned fluency, whilst in the previous question only 25.9% of teachers did not give their

students credit for it. Conversely, 37% of the respondents considered that students showed self-confidence towards any vocabulary improvement and 14.8% of them thought that this was highly dependent on students as individuals: “Los más deshinibidos tiran para adelante y hay otros que tienen pavor a hablar porque no se sienten seguros [...] Cada uno es un mundo y depende de ellos y de su microcosmos” (Int. 2); “Depende de la personalidad de cada uno. Hay unos que son muy confiados y hay otros que a lo mejor tienen menos confianza y, sin embargo, se expresan mejor que los que tienen mucha confianza en sí mismos. Depende” (Int. 20).

➤ *Open question 6: Do you think it is worth spending time on vocabulary teaching or do you focus on other aspects, such as grammar?*

When dealing with the importance of the target lexicon in FL teaching, most of the teachers (81.5%) claimed they paid attention to vocabulary learning in their classes. Some of them were really aware of the role vocabulary has to play since it was said to complete other teaching aspects, such as grammar: “Sen vocabulario non podes explicar gramática porque as frases están construídas sobre vocabulario, sexan verbos, adxectivos ou o que sexa” (Int. 4); “As miñas clases céntranse case exclusivamente en vocabulario. É moi importante, sen descoidar os outros aspectos” (Int. 12); “O vocabulario é un aspecto moi imporante pero non é un elemento illado. Ao contrario, está presente en todas as actividades e sempre ten que ser atendido aínda que moitas veces se prime a gramática por motivos de programas ou exames” (Int. 14) or “Das diversas destrezas da lingua,

as que teñen que ver coa adquisición do vocabulario son as máis importantes” (Int. 18).

Among those who considered other areas in class rather than vocabulary (18.5%), several reasons were mentioned to explain this issue. Thus, there was a lecturer who considered that vocabulary should be taught at earlier stages (primary or secondary school): “Eu son máis partidaria doutros aspectos a este nivel, a nivel universitario” (Int. 3), whereas others argued that lexicon acquisition was a matter of self-learning: “Eu céntrome máis noutros aspectos, sobre todo na comprensión, tanto na escrita coma oral, que me parece máis importante [...] A miña teoría é que o vocabulario vai saíndo” (Int. 5); “Eu creo que o vocabulario é fundamental pero creo que tamén depende moito do propio alumno, do tempo que lle dedica, non tanto do tempo que lle dedica o profesor na aula” (Int. 23).

➤ *Open question 7: What do you think vocabulary learning consists in? What are the best techniques to learn it?*

When discussing the best methods to learn new words, Figure 57 below shows that most of the subjects interviewed (27%) identified learning words within given contexts as good practice, in opposition to the traditional method of word lists, as reflected in “Yo creo que les resulta mucho más eficaz hacer ejercicios donde el vocabulario esté en un contexto [...] Así les resulta mucho más fácil y sencillo a la hora de fijar ese conocimiento a largo plazo” (Int. 8) or “Pode haber moitas técnicas pero creo que a que mellor lles funciona é ver o vocabulario dentro dun contexto” (Int. 14).

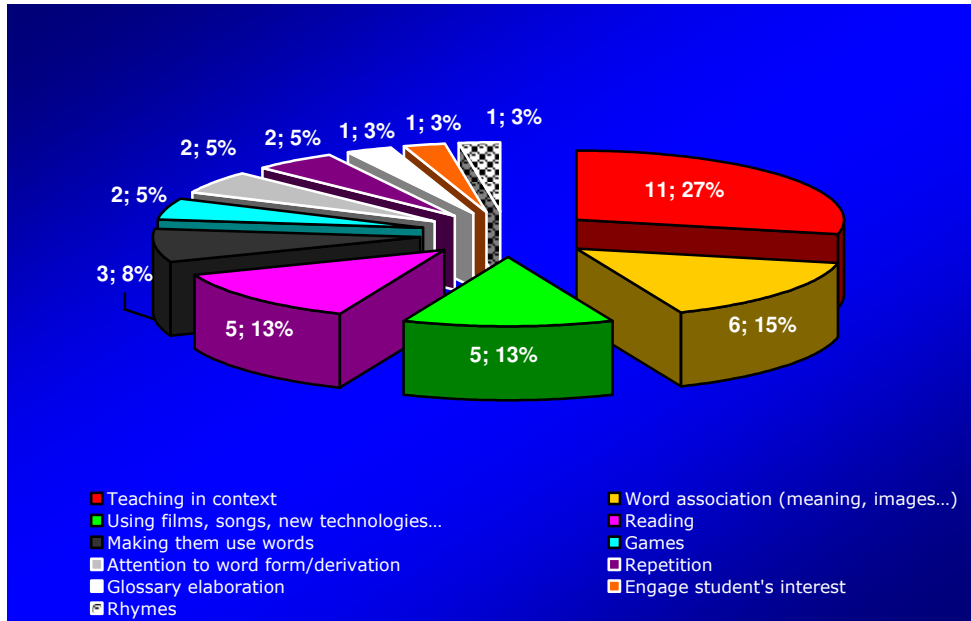


Figure 57: Best learning techniques identified by teachers

Fifteen per cent of the instructors surveyed highlight the importance of associating words either by meaning: “Creo que por relación, é dicir, campos semánticos” (Int. 17); by visual images: “La asociación de palabras a nivel visual” (Int. 1), “A niveis básicos asociación de imaxes e palabras” (Int. 17) and “Sempre se aprende moito máis fácil e rápido o vocabulario de obxectos concretos que se poidan representar visualmente por debuxos” (Int. 24) and by sound association: “Con técnicas auditivas de asociar el sonido” (Int. 1).

Two different techniques were mentioned by the same number of instructors (13%), namely, reading and using varied materials. The former was really praised: “Eu sempre fun partidaria da lectura como método fundamental para a aprendizaxe de vocabulario” (Int. 17) or “La lectura, sin duda. Es lo que les recomiendo” (Int. 19). The latter especially refers to audiovisual materials, such as songs, films, flashcards, the Internet, etc., “Ellos se acuerdan del vocabulario por

las canciones” (Int. 2), “Todo o que sexa con axuda visual ou con axuda das novas tecnoloxías encántalles” (Int. 21) and “Lo mejor es utilizar canciones” (Int. 27).

Three teachers (8%) said that they somehow encouraged students to use those new words they came across in order to retain them better: “Esixímoslle que saquen vocabulario dos textos, que fagan frases con el, que o utilicen dunha maneira activa” (Int. 7). Less popular techniques (5%) were using games: “Téño comprobado. Cando utilizo un xogo [...] co pique entre eles vexo que o aprenden” (Int. 4); paying attention to word form, that is, derivative means, such as suffixes or prefixes: “Eu o que lles fago é que saiban recoñecer cal é un sufixo, cal é un prefixo” (Int. 12) and, finally, repetition: “La repetición también es importante para ellos” (Int. 16).

Lastly, there were three strategies considered by three teachers respectively as interesting. Thus, one teacher (3%) stated that making their own glossaries was a positive technique for the learning of vocabulary: “A elaboración de glosarios sobre temas específicos é a estratexia que máis utilizan que, por outra banda, creo que é útil para eles” (Int. 3). Besides, creating rhymes (“Tamén os que dalgunha maneira poidan entrar en xogos de palabras, en rimas ou algo así, algo que sexa máis ou menos divertido” [Int. 24]) and engaging students’ attention were also mentioned (“It’s a question of engaging students’ interest. If they are actually interested in a topic, it makes them more willing to learn” [Int. 11]).

➤ *Open question 8: Do you consider the way you teach vocabulary to be good?*

Roughly speaking, can you describe your teaching techniques?

In general, teachers were quite satisfied with the way they teach EFL lexicon; it was rated as “good” by 51.9% of them. However, 25.9% of them could not answer the question because they were not sure about the effectiveness of their teaching method. One stated that she was not sure about her teaching approach because nobody helped her to do it better: “No lo sé. Un poco lo que leí, un poco lo que me enseñaron y un poco de intuición femenina [...] El cáncer de la educación española es que se trabaja individualmente. Somos muy egoístas” (Int. 2). Another teacher claimed that she had not really reflected upon her way of teaching until she filled in the questionnaire: “Pues no lo sé. Cuando me pasaste el cuestionario empecé a pensar en eso porque la verdad es que no utilizo ninguna técnica especial” (Int. 20). Apart from this, a slightly smaller proportion of instructors (22.2%) showed their frustration since they could not apply a suitable method either because of their students’ behaviour: “Tengo unas condiciones particulares de los alumnos que no me permiten realizar las actividades que yo querría [...] Son grupos bastante conflictivos” (Int. 1) or due to lack of time: “Na práctica, por cuestións de programas e demais, cando che falta tempo a quen llo roubo un pouco é a traballalo en clase” (Int. 7), “O número de alumnos que temos por curso e o apremio dos contidos que hai que dar impide traballar o vocabulario pausadamente como se debería [...] Recoñezo que non é suficiente” (Int. 18).

As shown in Figure 58, among those examples used by teachers to illustrate effective teaching techniques the most common one was contextualised teaching;

this was mentioned by 37% of subjects interviewed: “Creo que é bastante axeitado porque o vocabulario se aprende dentro dun contexto. Para eles é necesario contextualizado” (Int.23). The second most popular technique (23%) was concerned with the practice of vocabulary: “A práctica de vocabulario remarca a noción de uso apropiado e fai que os alumnos sintan a necesidade de arriscar falando en inglés para acadar soltura” (Int. 10). Less popular techniques were reading (“A min sempre me gustou que os estudantes lesen” [Int. 9]), word association (“Os alumnos asimilan bastante a noción de asociar ideas e conceptos cos exercicios de vocabulario” [Int. 10]), adapting words to students’ needs (“Corresponde a las necesidades que ellos tienen para obtener una serie de respuestas en un ambiente determinado” [Int. 13]), raising students’ awareness of the importance of learning vocabulary (“Creo que ellos a través de la forma en que yo me centro en el vocabulario se dan cuenta de que el vocabulario es tan necesario como otro componente de lo que puede ser una lengua. Ellos después le dan importancia a saber palabras” [Int. 16]) and lastly, using real anecdotes or situations to teach words (“Acostuma a funcionarme unha anécdota, unha situación e quédanse cun pouquiño máis que co significado” [Int. 22]); this was pointed out by 8% of the total, respectively.

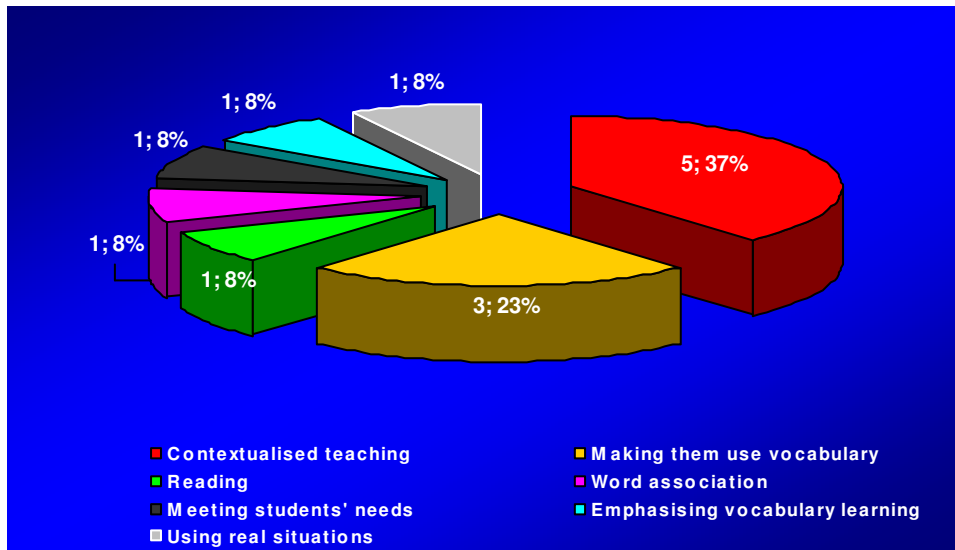


Figure 58: Instructors' teaching techniques

➤ *Open question 9: Do you think the way you teach vocabulary meets your students' expectations?*

The data elicited from this question show that the majority of the teachers questioned (51.9%) think that their teaching procedures meet their students' expectations; however, 25.9% of them maintain a different view and they justify it with several reasons. Some of them said that their students lack any expectations towards the way they should be taught EFL vocabulary: "Creo que non esperan nada. Eles non esperan que co vocabulario se lles vaia ensinar a estudar" (Int. 7) or "Hubo un cambio grande generacional. Creo que los alumnos ya no quieren aprender inglés en realidad" (Int. 15). Some of these teachers contend that their methods may surprise their students because of their innovative nature: "Eles están acostumbrados de toda a vida a aprender a lista de memoria. O dos xogos chócalles un pouco" (Int. 4) or "No. Yo no soy demasiado tradicional en el aula,

entonces creo que les sorprenden bastante mis técnicas para que les quede en la cabeza las cosas, como teatro...” (Int. 19).

Furthermore, a smaller group of instructors (22.2%) were hesitant about this issue. They argued that, once again, it was highly dependent on particular students, as quoted in “You have to ask the students. I can’t really say. It depends on individual students” (Int. 11) or “Depende da formación do alumnado, da maneira que tiveron de aprender no bacharelato ou na escola” (Int. 23).

➤ *Open question 10: What is the teacher’s role?*

As far as the teacher’s role is concerned, a varied number of replies were obtained (Figure 59). The highest percentage of these (20%) corresponds to the description of the teacher as providing students with different sources of knowledge and materials to enhance their own learning process, “Ofrecerlles textos, ofrecerlles posibilidades tanto na clase coma nos materiais a través da rede para que os estudantes poidan ter acceso a campos semánticos diferentes para que eles poidan aprender e incrementar o vocabulario” (Int. 9), “Ti non podes aprender vocabulario polos teus alumnos pero si que tes que proporcionarlles os medios para que eles o fagan” (Int. 17) or “Lo único que tengo que hacer yo es indicarles cuáles son los recursos y nada más. Flexibilidad total” (Int. 19).

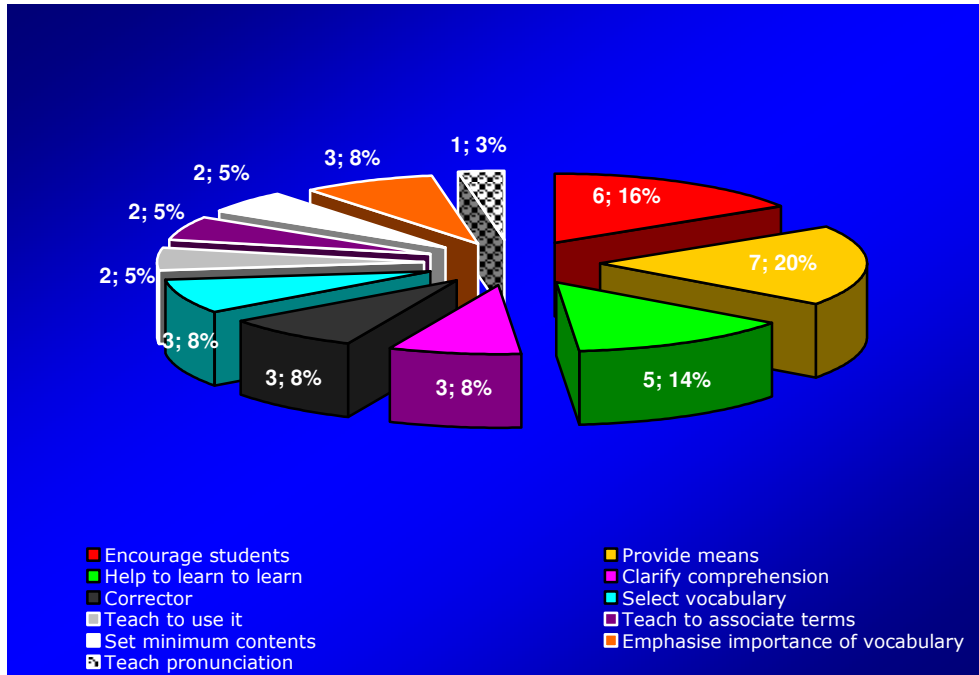


Figure 59: Teacher's role identified by instructors

Other instructors (16%) pointed to the image of the teacher as encouraging their students to learn target language words, “Eu creo que o profesor debe animar. Hoxe en día xa falamos de que non ensinamos nada. O proceso non é de ensino senón de aprendizaxe” (Int. 9), “I guess creating interests, creating a situation where the students want to express something about themselves” (Int. 11) or “Yo creo que tiene que ser un motivador, un estímulo para que ellos vayan adquiriendo destrezas, no sólo de aprendizaxe sino el propio vocabulario también” (Int. 15).

Fourteen per cent of the interviewees firmly believed that the main role a teacher has to adopt is that of helping their students learn to learn so that they may become autonomous learners. This is clearly seen in the following

quotations: “Cada uno tiene una manera de aprender vocabulario entonces se trata de enseñarles algunas técnicas que pueden usar a la hora de estudiar” (Int. 1) or “O rol do profesor é facer unha canle entre o vocabulario que lles faltan e as destezas que necesitan para poder saber ese vocabulario” (Int. 22).

Four different ideas related to the teachers’ role were stated by the same percentage of educators, that is, 8% respectively. The first of them claims that teachers have to reinforce their students’ understanding of new terms: “Consiste en primer lugar en enseñarles a ver cómo descifrar, que no digo traducir, el vocabulario dentro de un contexto” (Int. 13). The second one deals with the idea of teachers as correctors of their students’ mistakes: “Sobre todo en intentar dirigir la corrección de ejercicios y combinarlo con la técnica individual” (Int. 8). The teacher is also seen as the person in charge of selecting the appropriate vocabulary in accordance with students’ needs: “Lo principal es coger el vocabulario adecuado para ellos. Seleccionarlo” (Int. 20). Finally, two teachers believed that their main task in vocabulary teaching was making their students understand the importance of lexicon when learning EFL: “Enseñarles que una lengua consta de palabras y que hay que aprender palabras para poder comunicarse” (Int. 6).

Another set of three different roles applied to the FL teacher was also mentioned by the same number of respondents (5%, respectively). Some stated that their main role was teaching learners how to use English words in different contexts: “Para min o papel fundamental é ensinarlles o uso [...] en que momento, cando hai que utilizalo” (Int. 5). Others argued that teachers have to teach how to

draw associations between different concepts so as to assimilate them better: “Relacionar ese vocabulario con otros contextos y con otro vocabulario que gire alrededor” (Int. 13). Moreover, some others considered that the teacher’s main role was establishing the minimum contents that have to be covered during the teaching period so that students can know exactly those terms they are supposed to know at each stage: “Si estamos hablando de una clase de lengua donde va a haber una evaluación final, se supone que el profesor va a dictar ahí unos límites de hasta dónde tiene que llegar el aprendizaje de vocabulario” (Int. 16).

Finally, there was a respondent (3%) whose main preoccupation, apart from teaching how to use terms, was teaching how to pronounce words correctly: “a pronunciación, neste caso porque é fundamental para o inglés” (Int. 5).

➤ *Open question 11: What is your opinion about the so-called learning strategies? Do you think they work?*

The vast majority of teachers in this study acknowledged the importance of learning strategies since they were rated as useful by 63% of the students of the sample. One of them even described his successful experience using this kind of strategies: “Eu púxeno en proba nunha lección que fixemos hai pouco. A lección era “a miña rúa” e no libro de texto tiñan 6 ou 7 palabras de vocabulario da súa rúa e pouco máis. Eu pregunteilles aos nenos o que tiñan cada un na súa rúa e a partir de aí orixinouse unha lista de vocabulario que foron máis de 100 palabras e a maioría coñécenas porque saíu deles [...] Usárono nun exame mandeilles poñelo, fixeron debuxos e funcionou. Eles entenderon que o necesitaban para falar na súa rúa” (Int. 21). Conversely, only one teacher (3.7%) did not believe in

the effectiveness of learning strategies because she explained that self-learning might work when dealing with other fields of knowledge but not if applied to the teaching of foreign languages: “En xeral dame a impresión de que non. Eu penso que hai un certo erro no da aprendizaxe autónoma. Creo que é moi útil para determinadas materias pero para un idioma... No caso dun idioma cuxo vocabulario pode ser facilmente recoñecido visualmente, como pode ser o francés ou o italiano, pero un idioma cun vocabulario doutra familia lingüística necesita moita máis dirección” (Int. 24).

Moreover, 29.6% of interviewees considered that several factors accounted for the effectiveness or not of the aforementioned strategies. Some of them pointed out that students were the key feature in the success or failure of these techniques, that is, depending on individual learners some strategies may work whereas others may not, “Tiendo a pensar que sí pero está claro que no funcionan todas de igual manera con todo el mundo.” (Int. 2) or “Si el alumno está motivado, sí” (Int. 20). Other teachers claimed that the success depended on the commitment of the teacher who was responsible for those students: “Todo depende mucho de la capacidad del profesor para implementar esas estrategias o por lo menos para enseñarles cómo se pueden usar” (Int. 16) or “Si el profesorado de un centro no está implicado no valen para nada” (Int. 27). Lastly, one teacher contended that some strategies worked whereas others were not really effective: “Algunas sí, otras no. Ojalá tuviéramos alguna que funcionara muy bien” (Int. 6).

➤ *Open question 12: Do you think that students should be trained in the use of learning strategies in the English lessons?*

Teachers' positive attitude towards vocabulary learning strategies was confirmed in this question since all our interviewees except one were in favour of teaching or, at least, mentioning this type of strategies in English lessons in order to help students be responsible for their own learning process.

In contrast with the previous opinions, one of the instructors expressed her doubts towards these techniques because she claimed she was more traditional in her teaching. She said that the way she learnt English had been effective so she wanted to continue this way, avoiding rote memorisation: "Os meus derrotados non van por aí. Eu son máis tradicional no sentido de ir aprendendo como todos fomos aprendendo esquivando a chapatoria o máximo posible" (Int. 5).

4.2.2.2. Teachers' ideas about students' use of VLSs

As previously stated, the main purpose of this research was to explore the differences in beliefs and strategy use held by students and teachers. This second part investigates those vocabulary learning strategies employed by students that teachers were able to identify in their teaching experience. These will be illustrated using their own words.

➤ *Open question 13: Please describe what your students do to find out the meaning of new words*

Figure 60 below shows that when teachers were inquired about the strategies employed by students to discover the meaning of target language terms, many teachers, 38% of them, to be more exact, claimed that the first thing their

students did when facing an unknown word was resorting to a social strategy: asking other people for help. Some learners are also said to ask other classmates about word meaning, as quoted in: “In reading, they might probably ask the person next to them” (Int. 11), “Por máis que queiras, o primeiro é sempre preguntarlle ao do lado porque non son o suficientemente atrevidos todos para preguntarche a ti” (Int. 12) and “O primeiro que fan é preguntarlle a alguén que teñen cerca e pensan que sabe a resposta. Os alumnos peores inmediatamente recorren aos que máis saben” (Int. 18); whereas others ask directly to the teacher. In fact, most teachers complained about the fact that they were somehow used by their students as if they were dictionaries: “O primeiro tipo é dos que levantan a man e me pregunta directamente o que significa a palabra” (Int. 14), “Preguntándome a mí. Ya no siguen leyendo el texto. Parán, se ponen muy nerviosos y dicen: profe esto no sé lo que significa. Usándome a mí de diccionario” (Int.15), “O profesor sempre é o diccionario con patas” (Int. 18) and “Los más pequeños simplemente preguntan” (Int. 27).

Another strategy frequently reported was using a dictionary or any other source of information (Internet, specific glossaries...) to look up unknown words; this was mentioned by 30% of the subjects interviewed: “Hai dúas posibilidades. Se é un texto xeral, diccionario bilingüe. Se é un texto máis especializado, perderse en internet, buscar glosarios xa feitos en internet que poida haber para ese léxico” (Int. 3); “O terceiro paso é coller o diccionario e mirar. Hai xente que incluso trae a PDA ou dicionarios electrónicos” (Int. 18). Some teachers shared the idea that it was very important for students to know how to use this resource; they even told

their students not to depend so much on dictionary use: “A primeira reacción é coller os dicionarios da aula. Outro problema é como o usan” (Int. 7) and “A pesar de que a veces tienden enseguida a ir rápidamente al diccionario, yo intento que en clase no haya dicionarios disponibles” (Int. 8).

Some instructors (23%) claimed that the best students tried to get the meaning of individual words by paying attention to the context where they are embedded: “O segundo tipo de alumno que eu espero que sexa maior a medida que avance o curso, é o que mira o texto, le a palabra varias veces e trata de tentar deducir lóxicamente o que significa antes de preocuparte” (Int. 14), “Os alumnos de niveis superiores por contextualización, derivano a partir no contexto” (Int. 17) and “Hai catro intelixentes que colleron rápido a cousa e entón funcionarán por dedución” (Int. 24). It was a fact that many of these teachers placed emphasis on the importance of this learning strategy and even trained their students to use it before going to the dictionary or asking for help, “Eu sempre lles digo: o primeiro que tedes que facer nos exercicios de comprensión de texto é, se hai exercicios de lectura, ler os exercicios [...] En segundo lugar, ler o texto sen preocuparte das palabras. Simplemente lelo e intentar entender de que trata o texto, cal é o tema principal dese texto” (Int. 4), “Os máis maiores usan o contexto para tentar deducilo porque é algo que xa traballamos” (Int. 7) or “Intentamos que cada palabra que desconozcan facerle reflexionar sobre el tipo de palabra que es, qué tipo de categoría tiene, cuál es el contexto que la rodea, intentar deducir el significado por el resto de palabras que tenga alrededor” (Int. 8).

Finally, 9% of the subjects interviewed believed that students infer meaning by analysing contrastively EFL words and terms belonging to their mother tongue or to any other they are familiar with language: “Se apoyan en las palabras que conocen de antes [...] Si algunos saben francés, a lo mayor por el francés ya les suena” (Int. 2) and “Por otro lado, relacionar las palabras. A veces las palabras son auténticos calcos del latín y para ellos puede ser más o menos fácil de entender” (Int. 13)

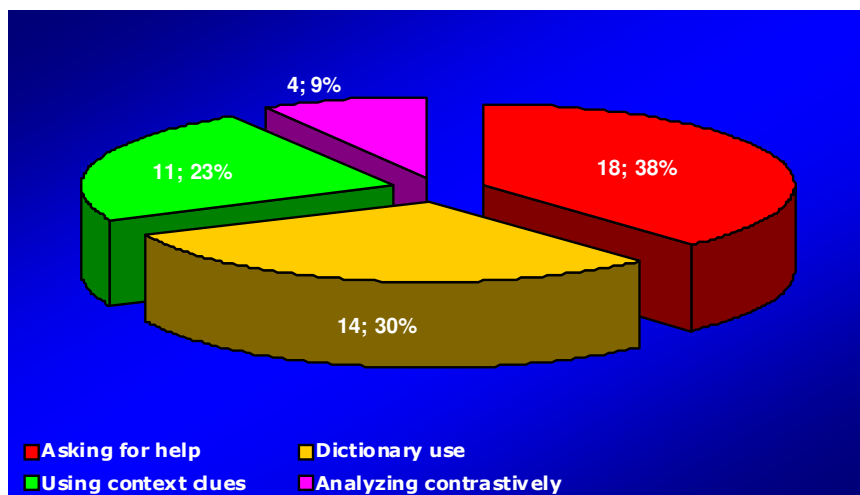


Figure 60: VLSs employed to discover/understand word meaning as perceived by teachers

➤ *Open question 14: Please describe what your students do to store these recently learnt terms into memory*

As observed in Figure 61, when asked about their students' storage into memory strategies, 35% of the respondents believed that, in general, learners resort to the traditional (ranked as such by many interviewees) method of word list to store FL into their memory: “Creo que se poñen a estudalo na maneira tradicional [...] Os máis pequenos utilizan as listas de palabras” (Int. 7), “Yo creo que hacen listas de

palabras y se las chapan” (Int. 15), “Teño moitos alumnos que fan listas durante a clase. No caderno ou nos folios fan seccións específicas para apuntar ese vocabulario” (Int. 18). It is curious to verify that some teachers discouraged students from using this kind of lists but their piece of advice is far from successful, as seen in “Ás veces queren facer listas e eu dígolle que unha lista está ben para saber o vocabulario pero non é a única maneira. Eu dígolles que non fagan listas porque non se trata diso senón de moita práctica” (Int. 22).

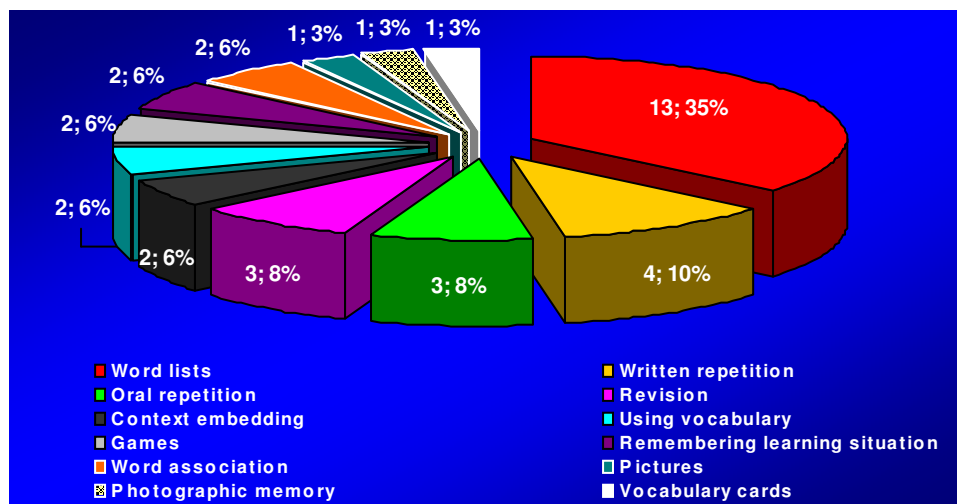


Figure 61: VLSs employed to store words into memory as perceived by teachers

There were others who also mentioned two rather traditional techniques: repetition, either written (10%) or oral (8%), and revision (8%). The former, that is, verbal and written repetition, has to do with language rehearsal and is said to be useful for learners: “Sinceramente, creo que lo escriben muchas veces o lo leen muchas veces, lo repiten en voz alta” (Int. 16), “A técnica de repetición sempre funcionou, ben sexa oral ou escrita” (Int. 17). The latter was said to be employed only those days right before the English test; this was sharply criticized by

teachers: “Eu creo que cando chega a época do exame revisan os apuntes, os libros e fan listas e estudan” (Int. 18).

Other storage into memory strategies suggested by a smaller number of teachers took context into account in two different ways: on the one hand, two of them (6%) explained that some learners integrated recently learnt terms into meaningful sentences or contexts in order to recall them better, “En Bacharelato, algúns pero moi poucos o utilizan dunha maneira activa. Collen as palabras e tentan facer frases con elas de maneira que sexan significativas” (Int. 7). On the other hand, the same percentage of teachers (6%) declared that some of their pupils were able to remember words by remembering the context or situation where the term was embedded: “Penso que recordando ou a situación da frase ou o contexto do texto. Vano almacenando” (Int. 5).

There were some instructors whose students employed specific types of strategies because they trained them to do so. Some of these maintain that their pupils create links between words so as to store them into their memory; this was considered by this group of instructors as a successful strategy: “Es bueno enseñarles a utilizar la asociación, no de significado con una palabra sino de un significado con una palabra en un contexto determinado. Por eso que la idea de utilizar unidades con topics concretos viene bien a la hora de fijar eso” (Int. 8). Some others contended that students are instructed to use the words they come across as much as possible in order to retain them in their memory: “Si yo quiero que retengan ese vocabulario tendré que trabajarlo procurando utilizarlo en el

mayor número de situaciones lingüísticas, hablar, escuchar, interactuar, comunicarse, escribirlo” (Int. 13).

Apart from that, learning terms in a ludic and innovative way was mentioned by some instructors (6%) as an efficient method of assimilation: “Creo que se quedan con lo que yo dije, con las actividades que son más innovadoras o las que les llama más la atención o que se salen de lo normal [...] creo que las aprendieron bien jugando a Tabú o Pictionary y todos esos” (Int. 19).

Finally, one teacher (3%) affirmed that some students tend to create a link between a picture and a concept, as in “Fan uso de fotodicionarios, digamos. Eles fan un debuxiño e logo imos xuntando as imaxes, que sempre lles queda mellor. Relacionan imaxe e palabra” (Int. 21). Other teacher (3%) claimed that there are some language tools such as vocabulary cards that seem to work for some students: “Hay algunos que me han dicho que usan una especie de tarjetas en español por un lado y en inglés por el otro” (Int. 16), whereas the loci method, also called photographic memory, by means of which learners remember words by recalling their exact location on a page, book or even on the blackboard was also mentioned: “Otros tienen una buena memoria fotográfica y se acuerdan: Sí, eso lo escribiste en la parte inferior del encerado hace una semana” (Int. 2).

➤ *Open question 15: Please, describe what your students do to retrieve vocabulary items from memory when needed*

Figure 62 shows the results related to retrieval strategies provided by the subjects interviewed. Roughly speaking, it could be stated that this question was extremely

difficult to answer since few learning strategies could be identified by the instructors interviewed.

A total of 19% of the teachers surveyed stated that learners were able to retrieve EFL by recalling the situation or context where they had learnt the term for the first time, “Recordar a situación comunicativa ou ben a estrutura” (Int. 10), “Relacionan esa palabra que agora aparece nun sitio novo coa situación na que a aprenderon” (Int. 25) and “Eu fíxome que moitos deles cando aprenden vocabulario asóciano á situación na que saíu, por exemplo, nun texto e eles asóciano co contexto no que saíu” (Int. 26).

Apart from the aforementioned strategy, there were also other techniques named but to a much lower extent. Firstly, 6% of the teachers questioned claimed to instruct their learners to create associations between words so as to facilitate vocabulary retrieval: “Eu o que fago moito é brainstorming. Digo: que palabras pensades vós que están relacionadas con este tema ou que vos poden ser útiles? [...] É unha alternativa que demostra que saben máis do que pensan” (Int. 4). The same percentage (6%) was obtained when dealing with the representation of word spelling or sound in memory for later recall. Thus, some learners are said to remember terms by the way they are written or pronounced: “Outras veces simplemente porque hai xente con moi boa memoria visual ou auditiva e simplemente o recordan” (Int. 5).

Moreover, three learning strategies were cited by three different teachers, which represent 3% of the total sample, respectively. One teacher postulated that the aforementioned photographic memory can also be used to remember specific

terms when needed: “Yo creo que acudir a la memoria visual, recordar dónde lo tenían escrito, memoria fotográfica, incluso a veces en qué parte del libro estaba esa palabra o algo así” (Int. 1). The possibility of recalling particular words by using contextual cues was also mentioned: “Se non é á memoria directa terá que bucear un pouco no tipo de texto, contextos posibles...” (Int. 3). Besides, there was another teacher who insisted on the idea that learners may create a mental picture of specific words and they may recall this picture, leading them to the required term, “Eso ya es un proceso neurológico. A lo mejor pensar una palabra en gallego o castellano que les recuerda a una imagen y la visualizan [...] Aprenden a asociar la palabra con una imagen” (Int. 20).

On the contrary, the majority of the respondents were not aware of any retrieval strategy on the part of their students. Indeed, 27% of them firmly believed that this retrieval process was an automatic procedure and as such, completely unconscious, “Eu creo que é automatico, máis na lingua falada que na escrita. Na lingua escrita creo que reflexionan máis” (Int. 7) and “Si lo tienen interiorizado no tienen que acudir a la memoria. Es un acto automático” (Int. 16).

Other subjects interviewed argued that if students could not retrieve the desired word in a communicative situation, they would give up trying to remember the term and they would show different types of behaviour: there are some (10%) who believe that learners use a circumlocution or synonym in case they cannot remember concrete words, as seen in “I think they usually resort to periphrasis until they might come up with the word” (Int. 11) and “Penso que na escrita a reflexión é moi importante e utilizan recursos de expresión como darlle a

volta ás cousas se non saben a palabra exacta ou un sinónimo” (Int. 14). Another group (10%) sharply criticized the fact that learners resort to translation to their L1 so as to overcome communicative limitations: “Logo hai os típicos que tentan traducir da súa lingua materna. Moitas veces corrixindo ves palabras inventadas” (Int.18), “Lo que hacen es traducir directamente” (Int. 19) “Eu creo que ás veces poñen o primeiro que lles vén á cabeza [...] Creo que a tradución non está a axudar demasiado” (Int. 22). Finally, a small group of teachers (10%) censured those learners who do not make enough effort to recall words from their memory and simply ask the teacher to provide them with the expected word: “Por desgraza para todos, moitas veces recorren a preguntar directamente e acostuman a recorrer ao galego ou castelán para facela” (Int. 23) and “O normal é que queden bloqueados se non lles vén á cabeza inmediatamente e simplemente lle preguntan ao profesor” (Int. 24).

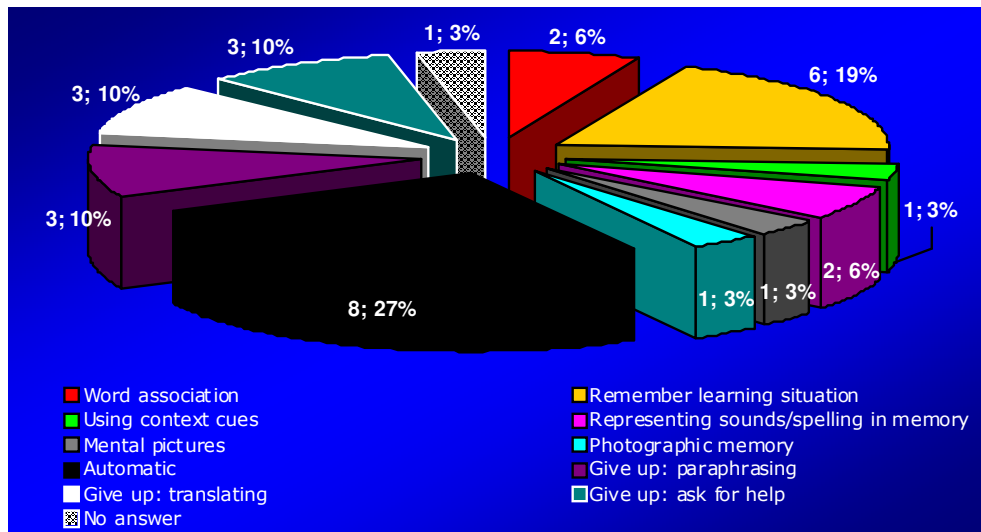


Figure 62: VLSs employed to retrieve words from memory as perceived by teachers

➤ *Open question 16: Please, describe what your students do to use the vocabulary items they are learning*

The participants were asked to indicate the extent to which their students employ the new target language terms they were learning. The results presented in Figure 63 are categorical: the majority of them (46%) believe that learners hardly ever make use of the vocabulary they are being taught. In fact, their first reaction was arguing that learners do not use EFL vocabulary at all and after reflecting for a while some of them stated possible situations where a small group of students might use some of the new lexical items.

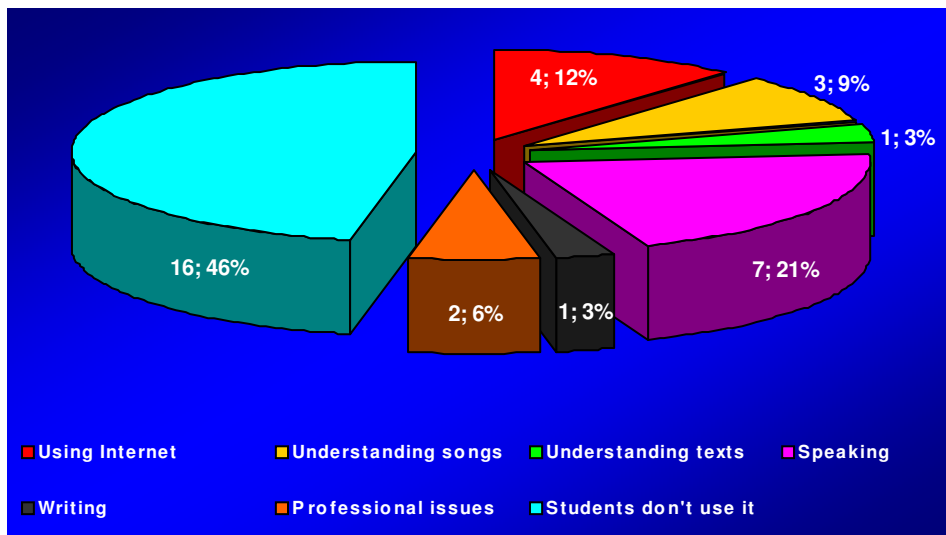


Figure 63: VLSs employed to use already learnt words as perceived by their teachers

Moreover, it is remarkable to find that many instructors mentioned that our educational system is too academic as a plausible reason for this failure: “Actualmente no hay situaciones en las que puedan usar ese vocabulario. Hay bastante distancia entre el vocabulario que puedas encontrar en un libro de texto

[...] Realmente a veces están aprendiendo un vocabulario distinto o más allá cuando aún no dominan un vocabulario básico de todos los días” (Int. 1), “Ás veces algunhas poden ser un pouco inútiles. O primeiro ano que dei clase recordo que lles dixen: [...] realmente o que vos fai falta é o inglés básico de comunicación. Vin a algún deses alumnos despois dos anos e dixéronme: que razón tiñas. Necesitamos o inglés de andar pola rúa” (Int. 4) and “Ao mellor dun grupo de 25 rapaces, pode haber 4 o 5 como moito que utilicen esas palabras” (Int. 22).

Moreover, 21% of the teachers interviewed said that some of their students employed learnt words to speak with foreign people from time to time: “I’m encouraging them more and more to meet American students we have next door and I prepared various encounter groups that seem to have worked with a few students” (Int. 11) and “Nunha cidade como Santiago sempre che contan anécdotas con turistas ou peregrinos que lles preguntan e eles responden mellor ou peor. Creo que é aí onde eles ven que o inglés é unha lingua útil e que poden utilizar para comunicar” (Int. 14).

In addition, 12% of the interviewees claimed that nowadays students have to employ English words when using some Internet utilities, such as chat programmes or e-mails, “Hoy en día lo tienen que utilizar cuando trabajan con el Messenger” (Int. 13) or “Se teñen a alguén por correo electrónico con quen compartir cousas e precisan vocabulario deses temas para falar con eles preocupápanse por adquirir ese vocabulario” (Int. 21). Besides, 9% of teachers questioned argued that the desire of understanding songs in English makes learners put into practice the new vocabulary: “Eu creo que hai rapaces que lles

gusta moito a música e seguen co vocabulario” (Int. 7) and “Quizás con la música más” (Int. 16).

Another group of instructors (6%) said that some learners needed English vocabulary for professional reasons, as described in “Pois eses son 4 ou 5 alumnos de cada 1000 que traballan estudando o vocabulario ou se no seu traballo lle cadra utilizar inglés pois fano” (Int. 24).

Finally, there were two other instances of vocabulary use mentioned by two teachers (3% respectively): the first one refers to the fact that learners incorporate words taught in class when doing written tasks, as in “Despois nas redaccións sempre hai alumnos que intentan incorporar ese vocabulario nas súas redaccións ou nas tarefas que fan na clase” (Int. 23). The second one is concerned with the application of known EFL terms to the understanding of texts, either written or verbal: “Creo que o utilizan máis de xeito pasivo, lectura e recepción oral” (Int. 17).

➤ *Open question 17: Do you think your students regulate or plan their own vocabulary learning process?*

As regards the group of metacognitive strategies that regulate and monitor students’ learning process, the vast majority of the teachers in this study (66.7%) reported that their students did not regulate or plan how to learn new words in English. Indeed, they complained about the fact that learners spent little or no time on vocabulary, as observed in: “Trabállano porque nós o traballamos na clase e facemos un montón de exercicios na clase pero á hora de estudalo pasan e eu xa non sei que facer” (Int. 7), “Preparan os exercicios que lles mandamos para a casa

onde se ven un pouco todos os aspectos pero non se trata dun estudo sistemático ou regrado do vocabulario” (Int. 14) and “Limitáanse a estudalo para a data do exame. Non teñen unha dinámica de estudo” (Int. 22).

In accordance with the previous views, a small group of respondents (18.5%) specified that some students devoted some time to study EFL words but only right before an exam, which was also considered as something negative, as observed in “Salvo situaciones puntuales tipo pre-examen, por exemplo, donde sí saben que es un contenido que puede caer en algún ejercicio” (Int. 1), “Unos días antes del examen repasan pero enfocado a hacer el examen y salvarlo, nada más. Luego no les interesa mucho más” (Int. 15) and “Sí, los dos días anteriores al examen” (Int. 27).

Conversely, only 14.8% of the respondents answered affirmatively to this question because they admitted training their students to do so: “Mis alumnos, sí porque se lo pongo en el examen y lo tienen que estudiar. Le tienen que dedicar tiempo porque si no, no lo hacen bien” (Int. 6) and “Eu supoño que si porque desde o principio lles digo que é o único que teñen novo nestes cursos” (Int. 12). It is worth mentioning that one of them taught at university to learners taking translation studies so students were trained to create specific glossaries: “Si, levan a cabo moita documentación de termos e máis as glosas, polo que si lle dedican tempo específico” (Int. 3). In other words, only those students who are instructed to spend time on vocabulary follow this rule. Otherwise, they are said not to be interested in this particular aspect of EFL learning.

➤ *Open question 18: Do you think your students restrict themselves to the vocabulary items you teach them or do they have additional sources of information?*

Results from the interviews indicated that teachers did not agree on whether students focused only on those terms taught in class or they expanded their lexicon using other sources of knowledge, according to their interests, mainly, videogames, Internet websites, computer software, mass media, songs, films in English, etc. Thus, 44% of them firmly believed that learners were interested in acquiring more EFL words than those studied in normal lessons: “Hay tres filones que son interesantes. Uno son los videojuegos que vienen en inglés y te suelen preguntar cosas por la cuenta que les trae. Otro es surfear por internet sobre la vida de cualquier actor o cantante...” (Int. 2), “Sí, yo creo que tienen intereses personales porque, de hecho, es una de las bases para aprender no sólo vocabulario sino un idioma en general. Si tienen un interés añadido en la lengua inglesa les lleva a escuchar música en ese idioma, a leer periódicos, novelas, libros, etc.” (Int. 8) and “Tienen otros intereses por su cuenta [...] Ven películas en los canales digitales que aunque les ponen la traducción siempre hay algo que se queda” (Int. 13).

In contrast, there was a smaller group of respondents (18.5%) who claimed that, in general, they did not observe any other interests from their students apart from the vocabulary presented and studied in class: “Non sei se é que son moi mal pensada pero creo que se centran no da clase só” (Int. 3) or “Yo creo que van al del libro [...] creo que estudian sólo y exclusivamente para aprobar el examen. El

inglés para ellos no es más que una asignatura más que tienen que hacer” (Int. 15).

Finally, other teachers (38%) also shared the same negative opinion as the previous ones but they specified that there are very small groups of good learners who tried to reinforce their lexical competence by using other resources and techniques outside the classroom, “Una minoría, a lo mejor los más motivados sí que se interesa por alguna cosa más, sobre todo cuando son temas que les interesan como música, letras de canciones...” (Int. 1), “La gran mayoría se centra únicamente en el vocabulario que se presenta en clase. Luego ese 15% del que hablamos antes a veces vienen con dudas de una canción o de algo que vieron en internet” (Int. 16), “Normalmente os mellores, os que teñen máis inquietudes, preocupápanse. Son os que collen os libros para ler ou que tentan ver o DVD en versión orixinal subtitulada e logo hai os que van a rastras e basicamente fan o mínimo para sacar o curso” (Int. 18) and “Pois a grande maioría céntrase no da clase en xeral pero hai alumnos que con internet ou cos chats, correos electrónicos, mensaxes ou iso que saben máis vocabulario que lles interesa a eles para poder comunicarse deste xeito coas persoas que coñecen” (Int.23).

➤ *Open question 19: Further remarks or comments*

Just as was the case with students’ interviews, some additional comments were provided by the teachers questioned. It was interesting to see how 14.8% of them were really worried about the current state of affairs of EFL vocabulary teaching and were willing to obtain advice from this study: “Espero que salga bien todo, a ver si mejoramos esto” (Int. 6), “Se atopades a variña máxica para que estuden o

vocabulario, apúntome” (Int. 7), “Espero que el tema mejore en el futuro porque ahora mismo está bastante mal” (Int. 15) and “Se sacades alguna conclusión que nos axude, por favor, mandádenola” (Int. 25).

Lastly, two educators (7.4%) showed their interest in lexical issues and they emphasised the relevance of this language area, as observed in “O vocabulario é un exercicio fascinante pero perigoso porque pode converterse en paráfrases e en comentario cultural. Se un profesor ten experiencias no estranxeiro pode ser unha tertulia” (Int. 10) and “Creo que es un tema muy bueno porque creo que el vocabulario es muy importante. Incluso después de vivir en España desde hace muchísimos años, aquí hay términos muy específicos para todo, porque en inglés las palabras valen para más de una cosa, creo que si no tienes vocabulario va a ser muy difícil llegar a tener la fluidez necesaria como para desenvolverse en otra cultura. Me parece un tema muy de actualidad” (Int. 16).

The results elicited from all the research instruments designed for the current study will be discussed in chapter 5 in order to provide definite answers to our original research questions.

Chapter 5

Discussion

Chapter 5 Discussion

As mentioned in the previous chapters, the current investigation focuses on the process of EFL vocabulary learning from a strategic point of view. Through both qualitative and quantitative analyses using the SPSS computer software package 11.0 and content analysis procedure, it was sought to answer some research questions. The data presented in the preceding chapter will be discussed according to the research questions formulated for this study; the results obtained from the questionnaires will be compared with those gathered from the interviews:

1. What are the beliefs about the vocabulary learning process held by Galician EFL learners?
2. Are the learners' beliefs homogeneous across the different research variables considered in this study?
3. Are the aforementioned learners' beliefs different from those of their teachers? If so, in what way and to what extent?
4. Is there any relationship between the aforementioned beliefs and vocabulary achievements as shown in the VLT?
5. What are the vocabulary learning strategies employed by Galician EFL learners?
6. Are learners' reported vocabulary learning strategies similar to those perceived by their teachers?

7. What particular factors exert influence on the choice and use of those vocabulary learning strategies?

5.1. RESEARCH QUESTION 1: What are the beliefs about the vocabulary learning process held by Galician EFL learners?

When addressing the issue of the ideas about lexical acquisition, it is necessary to refer to Elaine Horwitz, who designed the *Beliefs About Language Learning Instrument* or BALLI (1987). It is a 34-item questionnaire inquiring about the following language learning areas: foreign language aptitude, the difficulty of language learning, the nature of language learning, learning and communication strategies, and motivation and expectations.

As mentioned in the analysis of data (cf. Section 4.1.), the BALLI together with Gu and Johnson's (1996) and Schmidt and Watanabe's (2001) questionnaires were used as the basis to design our own questionnaires, selecting and adapting those items that best suited the current study. Thus, the area devoted to beliefs about vocabulary held by Galician EFL learners was further subcategorised into four main divisions: motivational issues, linguistic aspects, vocabulary learning and vocabulary teaching.

5.1.1. Motivational issues

Roughly speaking, it could be argued that students were motivated to learn EFL words, which confirms previous studies concerning students' motivation to learn English (Fan, 1999; Perclová, 2003; Siebert, 2003).

Students claimed they liked learning and using vocabulary (Means=3.82 and 3.69, respectively), which was endorsed by 65% of the learners interviewed. Moreover, their motivation was reinforced by the fact that learners found it useful to get a good job (M=3.78; Interview Percentage=12%) and to communicate with foreign people (M=3.59; IP=38%). It is curious to see how the students surveyed seem to be more instrumentally oriented, keeping in mind their professional career; interviewees' interest, however, is more closely connected with the improvement of communicative abilities when learning EFL terms (integrative motivation). These scores are very similar to those obtained by Fan (1999) about Hong Kong EFL learners' beliefs and strategies and also to those reported by Schmidt and Watanabe (2001) in Hawai'i, whose questionnaire constituted the starting point for the development of the survey employed in the current study. When asked about their reasons to learn English, students rated it as very important for their future (M=4) and to communicate with foreign speakers (M=3), given the relevance of English in most jobs and communication systems related to the new technologies, such as the Internet.

In the same light, Siebert (2003) surveyed the beliefs about language learning held by ESL students enrolled in an intensive English course in the USA. She concluded that they were highly motivated towards language learning. This statement was later endorsed by Bernat's (2006) investigation on the beliefs of 262 multi-ethnic background English for Academic Purposes (EAP) university students at an Australian university. The same applies to Percovlá (2003), whose

study on the beliefs of 893 Czech EFL learners showed that 80% of participants considered the FL both interesting and useful.

Lastly, it was a surprise to verify that our previous assumptions about the reason why they studied vocabulary, that is, “I learn it because it is useful to understand movies, songs, videogames...”, was supported by a lower number of subjects than in the case of the aforementioned reasons ($M=3.36$; $IP=8\%$). It seems that they are moderately less concerned about understanding everyday materials in English, yet the scores do not show a lack of interest.

It is worth mentioning that interviews were originally intended to throw light on the subjects' answers elicited from the survey. However, it provided much richer information than expected: the main motivation for up to 15% of the interviewees was that of passing exams, whilst 12% of respondents wanted to broaden their command of the FL by studying new words; these two statements had not been included in the questionnaire. The latter item supports the interpretation that learners are willing to learn vocabulary while the former refers to a small percentage of students without a real interest in vocabulary apart from fulfilling compulsory objectives.

We could add a further category that addresses the topic of individual ability for achievement in vocabulary learning; the vast majority (87.7%) of the subjects who answered the interview were optimistic about their future attainments, in spite of the fact that they perceived themselves as having only moderate levels of aptitude to acquire FL lexis ($M=3.13$); this figure was even lower in the case of the interviews, where 65.5% of them claimed that they did not possess any special gift

for language learning. However, according to Peacock, whose study in Taiwan found that only 18% of the students stated having a special aptitude to learn a FL, students may become “disheartened, and quit the EFL course. Underestimation of aptitude, however, may be a factor that is amenable to teacher intervention” (1998: 153). Peacock concluded that teachers should make students aware of their own capabilities.

These results were in accordance with the medium scores obtained in the items inquiring about learners’ control of anxiety: students felt moderately happy with the amount of words they knew in English (M=2.83) and did not feel particularly anxious when they have to communicate in this language (M=3.26). This likely shows that learners are fairly confident when speaking despite not knowing every single word in English and are able to overcome communicative difficulties.

Finally, the subjects surveyed rated the personal implication and effort applied to the study of lexis as reasonably acceptable (M=3.15) in spite of the lack of interesting lessons (M=2.75) and they never gave up studying vocabulary despite its difficulty (M=2.27). It seems clear, then, that learners are not prone to blaming themselves in case they do not achieve a reasonable command of EFL vocabulary and they set the problem somewhere else.

This endorses the findings of Banya and Chen’s (1997) study conducted in Taiwan with 224 EFL students. They found that positive beliefs about FL were reported by the most motivated learners, holding favourable attitudes and

willingness to acquire the language and were able to have their anxiety under control.

5.1.2. Linguistic aspects related to vocabulary learning

The first item within this category aimed to check whether students were aware of the importance of cultural aspects in learning vocabulary was completely endorsed by the score obtained in the survey (M=3.85). This is especially interesting for teachers who supported the idea that knowing a community's cultural values is essential to speak its language. Nowadays, this is reflected in the varied immersion programmes that take students to foreign language countries to improve their command of English. Moreover, learners also rated vocabulary learning as a moderately important aspect of FL learning (M=2.67) and at the same level as other areas of language learning, such as grammar (M=2.34; IP=85.2%). This finding represents the current changes in language teaching methodologies in Galicia, leaving aside the grammar-translation method, which focused on grammar principles, with the progressive implementation of communicative language teaching based on the balance and integration of the four skills.

Finally, English lexis in particular is regarded as a linguistic aspect of medium difficulty in the survey (M=2.81), matching the findings of Bernat and Lloyd's investigation, whose subjects considered English a "language of medium difficulty" (2007: 82). Nevertheless, it is surprising to see that the results obtained from the interview do not fully coincide with the previous statement, since 72.6% of the subjects questioned believed it was not difficult to learn. Thus, vocabulary

is not seen as an unattractive area of FL knowledge; learners refer to the difficult areas arising from the dissimilarities existing between the L1 and the FL (IP=35%), due to their Latin versus Germanic origins. They also mention how easily words are forgotten if they are not put into practice (IP=14%), together with the high percentage of polysemous terms in English, which is responsible for the students' confusion when coming across the same word in different contexts (IP=14%).

5.1.3. Vocabulary learning

In general, Galician students did not report clear-cut ideas towards the nature of vocabulary learning in the light of the medium scores obtained. They were unable to decide which the best method to learn words was: Self-learning (M=3.11), reading (M=3.17) or in-context learning (M=2.86); however, the last two were the most popular in the interviews since they were supported by 27% of the total. Yet, it should be borne in mind that they may know the way they learn lexis but they are not supposed to know the way it should be done.

In contrast, there was a total agreement on the idea that it is possible to learn new FL terms simply after coming across them several times in different contexts (M=3.84) and by putting words to use rather than memorising them (M=4.57, IP=8%), thus in keeping with the results gathered in Gu and Johnson's study (1996) and Li's (2004). Indeed, the context where words are embedded was rated as highly relevant by learners when they stated that guessing word meaning was one of the best techniques to learn new words (M=3.5) and that collocational aspects were to be borne in mind (M=3.96). On the other hand, the lowest score dealt with memorisation matters (M=2.61), a highly criticised technique.

However, interview results did not confirm the results obtained from the questionnaires because the memorisation of word lists was the second most popular learning strategy (IP=18%). This approach was even less popular in the aforementioned study carried out by Gu and Johnson (1996) since it obtained a mean of 3.04 on a 7-point Likert scale; Li's research (2004), however, showed just the opposite: rote learning was perceived as an effective way to remember words (M=4.18), since this method is very popular in the traditional Chinese culture.

5.1.4. Vocabulary teaching

As previously stated, several teaching principles to learn vocabulary established by Nation (2001 and 2003) were taken into account when designing this section of the SVLSQ and TVLSQ.

First, the item related to the fact that knowing a word entails more than knowing its counterpart in the L1 was really acknowledged (M= 4.02). This is indeed a positive finding because it is really difficult to make learners understand that there is not necessarily a one to one correspondence between a L1 and a FL word and that there are many other aspects to consider (Nation, 2001).

The learners of our survey also supported the idea that, in order to learn vocabulary, teachers must focus on it in a clear and systematic way (M=3.87), In fact, 33% of interviewees complained about the assumption that teachers spent little time on vocabulary instruction. Their opinion was also stated by Nation: "Vocabulary learning cannot be left to itself. It needs to be strengthened by careful planning and well-directed teaching" (2003, 150).

Furthermore, they predominantly believed that FL words should be presented in meaningful groups both in questionnaires (M=3.72) and in interviews, where it was declared good teaching practice (IP=16%). According to Nation (2000), this kind of grouping may increase learning difficulties; he argues that when paradigmatic items are unknown to students, there may be interferences among them (synonyms, antonyms, etc.). Only when the majority of terms are already known should words be presented in groups.

Two other appropriate teaching practices regarded as such by Nation (2003) were also mentioned: On the one hand, learners agreed that it is important to pay attention to word structure (prefixes, suffixes) in order to learn new terms (M=3.58). On the other hand, the combination of out-of-context and in-context vocabulary teaching was fully supported (M=3.87). Nevertheless, scores were lower when asked about the convenience of word lists (M=3.3). Moreover, although 18% of interviewees admitted resorting to this technique, it was rated as a bad technique by 45% of interviewees and only 2% of respondents were in favour of its use. It is clear that teachers should decide what terms to teach considering the usefulness of these words, as claimed by Nation (2003: 135):

The most useful vocabulary that every English language learner needs [...] is the most frequent 1000 word families of English. [...] After this, the most useful vocabulary depends on the goals of the learner.

But the compilation of word lists is nowadays seen as an old-fashioned technique, which may have influenced the data obtained.

As far as the teacher's role is concerned, they were fully aware of their importance in the promotion of their autonomy in the learning process so instructors were supposed to provide them with appropriate learning strategies (M=4.16), in accordance with Nation's instruction: "The teacher's role is to focus on the most useful vocabulary, to provide strategy training for the low frequency vocabulary" (2003: 150). However, they were not so sure about the teacher's role when explaining the meaning of a word in its context of occurrence (M=3.04); this indicates that students acknowledge that meaning is not the only aspect that counts. In fact, in the interview they were asked to verbalise their ideas about the role of the teachers and the most widely supported ideas were the following: teachers should teach students how to use FL words (IP=24%), teachers should provide specific contexts to exemplify specific terms (IP=18%) and teachers should offer specific exercises to practise vocabulary (IP=16%). Meaning explanations were not mentioned at all. Finally, learners agreed that specific vocabulary tests should be used as assessment instruments (M=3.65) and that they have to be designed taking into account vocabulary items that suit their learning goals (M=3.56).

5.2. RESEARCH QUESTION 2: Are the learners' beliefs homogeneous across the different research variables considered in this study?

Once students' assumptions on vocabulary were considered, remarkable differences among them were observed regarding all the research variables taken

into account: gender, age, grade and years of English instruction. They will be presented in turn.

5.2.1. Differences in beliefs according to gender

The descriptive analysis of the data reveals that female students possessed clearer ideas about vocabulary teaching and learning than their male counterparts. In fact, the ANOVA test showed significant differences between the subjects of the study according to the gender variable; this is in keeping with the results of previous studies (Bacon and Finnemann, 1992; Siebert, 2003).

Going into a more detailed analysis, females like learning and using vocabulary (M= 4.01; 3.82) and rated it useful both for their future careers (M=3.91) and to communicate with EFL speakers (M=3.84). Conversely, the opinions of male subjects were indefinite since they were not so enthusiastic about learning new words and they did not find English as valuable as women did. Female scores were also slightly higher in rating themselves as moderately good at acquiring lexis and in the effort they made in learning vocabulary, not giving up as easily as men in spite of hardship or boring lessons. In other words, female learners are more willing to learn FL vocabulary than men.

The same results were observed in an investigation conducted by Bacon and Finnemann (1992) with 938 university learners of Spanish in the United States, since women reported a higher degree of motivation in language learning.

As for the different dimensions of beliefs concerning language learning, female learners supported reading and putting words to use as good ways of acquiring vocabulary to a higher extent than men; however, they did not hold very positive

views on memorising new words (M=2.47, versus 2.86 from men). Accordingly, it could be concluded that the memorisation of individual words is more typical of male learners whereas reading and using the new terms could be regarded as more feminine techniques.

Finally, when dealing with general teaching approaches women were more aware of the many different aspects included in knowing a word (M=4.15, in contrast with 3.80), as well as the complementary nature of in-context and out-of-context teaching (M=3.96 versus 3.72) and that teachers should offer students learning strategies that fostered their autonomy (M=4.28 versus 3.95). In contrast, they maintained less favourable positions towards the idea that teachers should create word lists for students (M=3.22, versus 3.42) and that the instructors' main role was explaining vocabulary in context (M=2.95 versus 3.18) or that vocabulary tests should be based on lists of frequent words (M=2.95 versus 3.23). To make it short, not only are female learners more motivated but they also show stronger beliefs about how vocabulary is learnt and how it should be taught; male learners, however, were much more undecided about all these questions.

5.2.2. Differences in beliefs according to age

Just as was expected, Galician EFL younger and older students' beliefs showed significant differences across many categories (12-14; 15-17; 18-20; 21-23; 24-26; +26). To begin with, the general statement the older the learner, the more motivated could be contended in the light of the results obtained: 20-year old students seem to represent a borderline between really motivated learners and

those who are more undecided. Indeed, older learners reported they liked learning and using words and rated this FL as useful to communicate with English speaking people and to understand materials in this language; younger students' scores were, however, much lower. I would also like to make a special comment on the data obtained about the item concerning the relevance of this FL to find a good job; it somehow contradicts the aforementioned conclusion: all students considered English as a facilitating element for their future careers and only those learners above 26 were more dubious about this (M=3.13); this could be explained by the fact that some of them may already form part of the labour market whereas younger learners are still at school. Moreover, learners' profiles differed when they rated their own vocabulary learning aptitude, with means slightly lower among younger learners. The youngest group (12-14 years old) was the only one who claimed to make a great effort to learn vocabulary (M=3.55), in contrast with the moderate commitment shown by the remaining students. However, this same group was also the only one not to give up studying even if classroom materials were boring (M= 2.49). These data certainly ask for a reflection: younger learners do not like vocabulary and think that their effort is big enough in spite of boredom; this must be taken into account in teaching practice.

As regards linguistic aspects, once again all groups acknowledged that the cultural aspects of a community are reflected in its lexis, except for the youngest students, who did not provide a clear answer (M=3.35). The same could be applied to the item that stated that learning a FL is essentially learning its vocabulary: the group of youngest learners were undecided, in contrast with the

rest of learners, who did not support this statement. In short, as expected, experienced students provided clearer replies about the FL lexis. However, the youngest students rated the hardness of learning vocabulary slightly higher than the rest. This finding somehow contradicts other results gathered in studies carried out by Mary *et al.* (2008) and Perclová (2003). The former study investigated the beliefs of the Institute of Teacher Education students in Malaysia and no correlation was observed between age and self-rated aptitude in this FL or the idea of English language difficulty. However, a plausible explanation for this is that “all the students are already exposed to the world as the youngest student in this study is eighteen years old” (2008: 19), whereas the subjects in the current study show a wider range of age differences. It is logical to assume that learners of very different ages may hold different opinions from adults. Perclová’s research (2003) is concerned with the beliefs of primary and secondary school students in Prague, where the older the learners, the more difficult they rated learning an FL. This may be due to the fact that the subjects of her study were primary school students and their perception of FL languages is rather playful; whereas secondary school subjects are more aware of the effort needed to learn a foreign language.

Conversely, when dealing with the nature of vocabulary learning, the first set of students (12-14 years old) showed the lowest degree of support to reading and the necessity of acquiring words in context; however, they were the biggest supporters of self-learning and memorisation as good learning methods. Indeed, the younger the learners, the more they valued memorisation, which may reflect the way they are currently being taught.

Lastly, the same group (12-14 years old) stroke the discordant note within the section devoted to vocabulary teaching. On the one hand, they obtained the highest mean scores in the items stating that vocabulary asks for clear and systematic teaching, the relevance of word structure and also that teachers' role was explaining the meaning of new terms in the context of occurrence. Moreover, they firmly supported teachers' use of word lists and vocabulary tests based on frequent words, in contrast with the medium scores obtained from the remaining learners. Furthermore, they felt more insecure about what knowing a word entails or whether contextualised teaching is needed to compensate out-of-context teaching. In short, they are reliant on more mechanical techniques, such as focusing on word structure (prefixes, suffixes...) or word lists and less sure about the importance of context in teaching or the minimum lexical contents they have to master.

5.2.3. Differences in beliefs according to the grade variable

The results obtained also showed that grade was a significant factor. When considering students' opinions on vocabulary teaching and learning, important differences were observed between and across the four groups of subjects considered: 1st-2nd compulsory secondary education (ESO), 3rd-4th compulsory secondary education (ESO), post-compulsory secondary education (BAC), university (UNI), school of languages (EOI) and other institutions (OTH).

Firstly, the means recorded regarding motivational issues show a correlation with the previous age factor; younger learners were studying compulsory secondary education (ESO) whereas older students could be studying at

University, school of languages or at other institutions, such as the Modern Language Centre. Thus, the older the learner, the more he/she likes learning and using vocabulary and the more he/she values this FL to understand materials (Internet, films, songs...) and to communicate with English speakers; younger learners, on the contrary, were less resolute. Curiously enough, all students found English a worthy means to find a good job except for those enrolled in OTH institutions, who were not so positive about this. To put it another way, those taking compulsory studies are less motivated to learn FL lexis whereas those taking non-compulsory studies are willing to learn and appraise English as a useful communicative tool.

As for the learner profile, 3rd-4th year ESO and BAC students rated their aptitude to learn FL lexis slightly poorer than the remaining groups. Moreover, only 1st-2nd year ESO learners admitted making a great effort in acquiring new words (M=3.64) and, curiously enough, the ones more tolerant to boring materials or lessons were 3rd-4th year ESO and EOI students. The latter were highly motivated towards learning so it is understandable that they want to learn no matter how bored they get in doing it; 3rd-4th year ESO students' tolerance towards boring lessons is rather curious since they were the least motivated of all.

Secondly, as regards linguistic considerations about vocabulary, secondary school learners were more undecided about whether cultural aspects were reflected in lexis (fully supported by the remaining groups) or whether learning a FL is essentially learning its vocabulary (fully rejected by the rest). Lastly, all learners argued that English vocabulary was moderately difficult to learn

(although means were slightly higher among secondary school students) but this was not the case of university students, who rated it as relatively easy (M=2.34). In short, students with a limited command of English rated vocabulary learning as more difficult than high achievers.

Thirdly, ESO students were less convinced than the rest of the learners about the importance of context in vocabulary learning. Conversely, 1st-2nd year ESO learners were the only ones to support the memorisation of individual words as an effective learning method (M=3.56) whereas learners taking non-compulsory studies maintained the opposite position towards memorisation. Finally, all of them firmly believed in the importance of putting words to use more than memorisation; ESO learners' scores were; however, lightly lower. Just as was the case with the previous factor of analysis, that is, age, secondary school students (roughly speaking the youngest ones) were less aware of context importance and supported to a greater extent memorisation techniques; this may, no doubt, reflect their instructors' procedures when teaching vocabulary.

Fourthly, secondary students were also the group that showed the highest number of peculiarities in their conceptions about vocabulary teaching. They obtained the lowest scores about the idea that knowing a term involves knowing more than its translation and that decontextualised activities should be completed with in-context ones. However, they supported the idea that vocabulary needs to be taught in a clear and systematic way and that the teachers' role is explaining word meaning in context a little more than the rest. Furthermore, in contrast with the medium scores shown by the remaining groups,

they clearly believed that teachers should compile word lists for their students and that vocabulary tests should be based on lists of frequent words. To make it short, secondary school students seem to depend on teachers and defend less sophisticated techniques to a greater extent than the rest of the learners.

5.2.4. Differences in beliefs according to the period of time learning English

The last factor to be observed in the present study was the participants' length of time learning English. To do so, subjects were divided into three groups: those who have been studying the FL up to five years, those between 6 and 10 years and those who have been instructed in English for more than 10 years.

Taking into account the descriptive analysis provided in chapter 4, this last factor showed less significant differences than the rest of the variables considered. The highest number of differences was connected with the motivation variable, endorsing the conclusions included in Shen's investigation (2006) on the beliefs about language learning and LLS use of 250 Taiwanese high school students. It was found that learners who had studied English for longer periods of time had stronger beliefs about language learning. Thus, those who had studied English from 6 to 10 years were the ones who liked learning and using vocabulary to a lesser extent. This may be due to the fact that when they start learning a new language, they normally show curiosity but after a while they may get bored and continue studying this language only because it is a compulsory course. Those who study English for longer periods of time are really motivated to improve their lexical competence. In fact, the longer the period of time learning

the foreign language, the more the language was valued to understand materials written in English.

In addition to this, there were two statistically divergent items dealing with linguistic aspects of lexis: first, the scores of the group of the most experienced students (+10) were slightly lower when considering the difficulty of learning words. Second, they did not support the idea that learning a FL is essentially acquiring its lexis; less experienced students felt, however, dubious about this statement.

Finally, the last group of learners (+10) were against the memorisation of individual words as an effective means of learning, while the remaining groups obtained medium scores and they also showed moderately lower means on the design of vocabulary tests based on frequent terms. In the light of these data, it could be concluded that there is a correlation between long experience in language learning with more definite beliefs about it; this is certainly up to our expectations.

5.3. RESEARCH QUESTION 3: Are the aforementioned learners' beliefs different from those of their teachers? If so, in what way and to what extent?

Once both quantitative and qualitative data have been presented in chapter 4, it is time now to compare the reported teachers' beliefs and their students' beliefs about language learning. As previously stated (cf. Section 2.2.4.7.), on the basis of the results of previous research (Banya and Cheng, 1997 and Peacock, 1998) Bernat (2007) contended that a mismatch between beliefs may cause

unnecessary tensions and lack of teaching effectiveness. Thus, we wanted to confirm whether there were any differences in learners' and teacher's ideas about vocabulary.

To do so, we will employ again Oxford's definition of mean scores (1990: 291): on a scale from 1 to 5, 3,5 to 5,0 scores are rated as "high", 2,5 to 3,4 scores are considered as "medium" and 1,0 to 2,4 scores are labelled as "low". Significant differences will be offered in turn.

5.3.1. Motivational issues

Motivation was the category where most differences between learners' and teachers beliefs were identified, both in the questionnaires and in the interviews. Thus, it was previously observed that students reported liking (M=3.82; IP=65%) and using (M=3.69) FL vocabulary. However, teachers' results were not so clear: on the one hand, in the questionnaires they stated that their students liked acquiring new lexical items (M=3.7) but these data were not endorsed by those elicited from the interviews, where half of the instructors (52%) argued that their students did not like learning vocabulary and 11% of them answered that it all depended on individual learners. This was even clearer when teachers were inquired whether students liked using vocabulary, they were dubious about it (M=2.61), a much lower means than that shown by students. Instructors have a negative perception of their students' willingness to acquire FL vocabulary; the latter, however, showed their interest in vocabulary without reservations. This is may be the first source of tension between these two groups.

The same tendency applies to the learners' reasons to study vocabulary: teachers' scores were much lower than those obtained from the learners. They labelled English as valuable to find a good job (M=3.78) and to communicate with English speakers (M=3.59); teachers, however, were more undetermined (M=2.93 and 2.9, respectively). Moreover, data collected from the interviews showed that teachers were aware of their students' reasons for learning English, since they overall stated the same motivations but they differed in the percentages shown: learners' most supported reason to improve the learning of vocabulary was to express themselves in the FL (IP=38%); this contrasts with the results obtained from the teachers since only 27% of them held that position. Indeed, instructors firmly believed that students' main purpose was to pass exams exclusively (IP=34%), whereas this reason was only admitted by 15% of the learners. Next, students reported intrinsic motivations to learn vocabulary, such as broadening their command of the FL (IP= 12%); this was only acknowledged by 4% of their instructors. As for extrinsic reasons, 12% of the learners were worried about their future careers and a different group of them (8%) made an effort to enhance lexis in order to understand English materials. The latter matched perfectly instructor's beliefs (IP=8%) but only 4% of the teachers questioned thought that learners valued FL words to help them in their future careers. Moreover, teachers' third plausible reason why learners studied vocabulary was only because it was a compulsory course (IP=15%), whereas only 8% of the students admitted doing so. In short, teachers' perception of their students' purposes for the learning of vocabulary was mostly negative: mainly to pass exams or only because it was

obligatory. However, apart from the aforementioned reasons, most of the learners questioned really wanted to learn vocabulary due to intrinsic (broaden their knowledge) or extrinsic reasons (express themselves, find a good job or understand concrete materials).

As regards the learners' profile, several divergences were also found. Teachers argued that learners got anxious when trying to speak in the FL (IP=3.88) but this was not fully confirmed by learners, whose scores were quite lower (IP=3.26). It seems that learners control anxiety better than their instructors give them credit for. Besides, in the interviews learners and educators did not fully agree on their answers about future achievements: While the vast majority of the students (87.7%) seem to be confident in acquiring a proficient vocabulary level, only 37% of the teachers questioned perceived this optimism and 26% of these argued that it all depended on individual learners. This feedback confirmed the data obtained in the study conducted by Banya and Cheng (1997) about university students and teachers in Taiwan and Bernat's (2007) survey in Australia; they all demonstrated that students were more optimistic in language learning than their teachers.

Furthermore, both groups share similar views in labelling the effort made in learning vocabulary within a medium range but there were discrepancies when defining whether students give up studying lexis or not. Students stated that they did not quit studying FL words despite the difficulties found (M=2.27) while teachers thought they did so to a higher extent (M=3.28). The former also reported giving up vocabulary when they found lessons or materials to be boring not in a high degree (M=2.75) but their instructors were completely sure they did

so (M=3.91). Once again, teachers' views about their students are more pessimistic and negative than the actual data obtained from them.

5.3.2. Linguistic aspects related to vocabulary learning

As far as vocabulary linguistic aspects are concerned and contrary to Banya and Chen's study (1997), where teachers attached a higher difficulty to learn a FL than students, in the current research both teachers' and students' beliefs matched. The only exception was the item stating that learning a FL means mainly learning its vocabulary. The teachers of this study did not support this statement (M=2.44) whereas students felt more undecided about it (M=2.67). It seems obvious that teachers should hold stronger beliefs than students, as was the case in the current research. Peacock's research (1998) in Hong Kong showed that the vast majority of learners supported the statement "learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of new vocabulary words", contrarily to the teachers' opinion. In the light of this result, Peacock (1998: 152) claimed that students "may also become very dissatisfied with a teacher who does not emphasise learning vocabulary".

5.3.3. Vocabulary learning

In this category, discrepancy between learners and teachers was found in the areas of contextualised learning and memorisation. Thus, teachers really agreed on the idea that words should only be learnt in context (M= 3.88) and disagreed on the principle that memorising individual words was a good learning method (M=2.06). Conversely, students' scores were more undetermined about these ideas (M=2.86 and 2.61, respectively), which means that they are not considering

any of these techniques as “good” or “bad” learning approaches. In the same light, after carrying out a study in the USA comparing university teachers’ and students’ beliefs about language learning, Siebert (2003) could observe important differences between both groups regarding learning methods leading to significant pedagogical implications.

In the interviews, they were both asked to describe their ideas about how words are learnt and they agreed on many of their assumptions, although the emphasis placed on each of them varied quite a lot.

Students’ most common belief about lexical acquisition was that words are learnt by reading and using context cues (IP=27%), more commonly supported by teachers, with 27% of them in favour of learning terms in context and 13% for reading. Next, learners reported compiling lists of words (IP=18%), a learning technique not mentioned by teachers, so it seems that students resort to a rather traditional method with a strong focus on memorisation.

The drawing of links between words (synonyms, spelling, sound...) was slightly more positively valued by teachers (IP=15%) than by students (IP=12%) and the same applies to the pedagogical approach that entails using materials in the FL to acquire new words (teachers’ IP=13% versus students’ IP=9%).

5.3.4. Vocabulary teaching

Interesting findings were obtained in this category despite the fact that learners’ degree of satisfaction with the way they were taught and the degree of teachers’ self-assessed satisfaction with their own work were coincident: both groups were quite happy.

Nevertheless, it was a surprise that in 3 divergent items (31, 33 and 40) students held stronger beliefs than teachers. Indeed, students showed a greater awareness of the need for vocabulary to be taught in a clear and systematic way ($M= 3.87$) whereas teachers moderately agreed on that ($M= 3.3$). It is important for instructors to acknowledge that learners have specific expectations about the way they should be trained on English vocabulary; ignoring this may cause learning problems.

Furthermore, students supported paying attention to word structure (suffixes, prefixes...) as an efficient teaching technique ($M=3.58$), just as they believed that specific vocabulary tests should be based on useful words rather than on frequent words ($M=3.56$). However, teachers' means were lower ($M=3.4$ and 3.41 , respectively), within the middle range.

As already reported (cf. section 4), in interviews students were asked to describe their teachers' techniques and to label them as good or bad practices; at the same time teachers were asked about their teaching of vocabulary. Thus, both groups coincided in reporting contextualised teaching (23% of students versus 37% of teachers), instructing how to use words (23% of both), creating links between terms (16% of students versus 8%), reading (only 3% of students versus 23% of teachers) and adapting the vocabulary to the students' needs (3% of students versus 8%) as effective teaching techniques. However, there were other strategies mentioned by students which were not so by teachers: providing illustrative examples of terms (9%), doing specific vocabulary exercises (6%), teaching how to guess word meaning (3%), speaking English in class (3%), focusing

on phonetic aspects (3%), using drawings (2%), employing audiovisual materials (2%), compiling word lists (2%), teaching with games (1%) and paying attention to word formation processes (1%). Teachers also described emphasising the importance of words (8%) and of using real situations or anecdotes to teach (8%); this, however, was not perceived by learners. All in all, it is surprising to observe how students were able to describe a larger amount of teaching techniques than their instructors although they overall agreed on the good practices.

In addition, other techniques used by instructors were criticised by the students: the compilation of word lists (45%), paying scarce attention to vocabulary (33%), providing only the meaning of concepts (10%), not adapting lexis to the needs of students (4%), total lack of practice (2%) or attention to phonetic features (2%). There seems to be a contradiction in the group of students regarding word lists; however, it is evident that the vast majority of the students questioned despise this technique and only a few of the subjects interviewed liked it. What is more, none of the teachers mentioned this teaching procedure although many students reported that their teachers made use of these lists, so unpopular among respondents.

To anticipate possible misunderstandings or contradictions, teachers were directly asked to express their beliefs about the role of the teacher in vocabulary instruction; many of their answers were intimately connected with the complaints expressed by students. Thus, an important group of instructors (20%) believed that their main role consisted in making available to students as many resources as possible so that they can take advantage of them to improve their lexical

competence. Sixteen per cent of them thought that they had to encourage learners to keep their interest in the FL and fourteen per cent of them claimed that they should teach students how to learn. Next, eight per cent of them described the role of teacher as facilitating students' comprehension of new terms, selecting the words that suit learners' needs, correcting students' mistakes or emphasising the importance of the lexical aspect in acquiring a FL. Teaching how to use words (5%) and to establish links between words (5%), setting the minimum contents learners should master (5%) and teaching the correct pronunciation of terms (3%) were less commonly mentioned. In short, given that most of the teachers considered that they had to focus on those aspects that promote students' autonomy; there should be a reflection of this in the consideration of learning strategies.

5.4. RESEARCH QUESTION 4: Is there any relationship between the aforementioned beliefs and vocabulary achievements as shown in the VLT?

When we compare students' personal information with their VLT performance, we found striking differences regarding the research variables already mentioned. Some studies have been conducted to find out whether there were any differences between high and low scoring students; their conclusions are really interesting (Banya and Chen, 1997; Peacock, 1998; Fan, 2003; Huang and Tsai, 2003; Peclová, 2003; Hong, 2006).

As explained above (cf. chapter 3), the results of the test were used as a grouping tool to subcategorise students into low proficient (-1000), lower-

intermediate (1000), upper-intermediate (2000) and high proficient (3000-5000). The overall VLT result was of 1000 words (M: 2.23) but this was statistically different depending on the research variables.

Firstly, female learners performed better at the VLT than male ones; according to this, the former had an average knowledge of 1000 words (M=2.45) whereas the male group could not reach this cut-off point and stayed below 1000 words level (M: 1.89). The same results were obtained by Gu (2002) with Chinese EFL learners, who observed how females' scores were better than male ones. Secondly, an expected decisive factor was learners' age because it seems obvious that the younger the student, the lower the proficiency level. Indeed, this hypothesis was absolutely endorsed in the light of the VLT scores: underage learners were not able to reach the 1000-level; however, students over 21 showed the highest word level, that is, 2000. Thirdly, the hypothesis that stated that results obtained by learners taking different studies (compulsory versus post-compulsory education) should be different was also confirmed. Compulsory secondary education and non-compulsory secondary education students (ESO and Bacharelato, respectively) were under the 1000-level, which in the case of BAC learners was an unpleasant surprise. School of language students showed an average command of 1000 words since they belonged to different years. At the other pole of the continuum, University students obtained the highest scores (2000), which was not unexpected since their major was English. Lastly, the hypothesis that claimed that the longer the EFL instruction, the better they perform was not confirmed. It was amazing to see how the lowest scores

corresponded to learners who had been studying English from 6 to 10 years whereas those with a shorter period of instruction performed better. It seems that it is not the amount of time available to learn a FL what matters but its effective use.

In the light of the above, one of the aims of this study was to investigate whether poor and high achievers differed in their assumptions about vocabulary learning, which was fully verified by the data presented in the previous chapter.

5.4.1. Motivational issues

Motivation constituted the category with the highest number of statistically relevant differences between groups. To start with, there was a significant disagreement on the extent to which students liked learning and using the FL lexis: the mean scores increased in a gradual way from poor to high achievers. So, those who showed the highest command of lexis were those who enjoyed learning new words in English the most. This means that teachers should take this into account when dealing with vocabulary and make their teaching as attractive and useful to their students as possible so that they may learn to appreciate it.

Moreover, extrinsic motivation was also a source of divergence and the previous conclusion could be rendered from the data regarding the perceived usefulness of FL terms: those who obtained the best scores had a higher reckoning of vocabulary as a valuable tool to understand materials in this FL and to communicate with English speakers. In 1999 Fan conducted a similar research study in Hong Kong about the beliefs and strategies of EFL learners and found a positive correlation between extrinsic motivation and English proficiency. Along

with this study, Peclová (2003) drew an association between students with good grades and their positive attitudes to language learning.

As for the learner profile, it was discovered that the best learners are the ones who considered themselves good at learning FL lexis, just as was the case of the aforementioned study carried out by Peclová (2003: 162), who stated that “the better the learners, the more self-confident they are about their linguistic abilities”. Likewise, Huang and Tsai (2003) investigated the beliefs of EFL learners in Taiwan and they detected that high proficient learners affirmed being endowed with a special ability for FL learning whereas low proficient ones held the opposite belief. Besides, Hong (2006) investigated the ideas of Korean university students and also found that the better they rated their proficiency, the stronger was their confidence in learning English. It is important, then, to praise students’ capacity to acquire FL terms so that their self-esteem and confidence in their own capacities do not decrease.

Furthermore, a statistically significant correlation was observed between poor learners and high levels of anxiety when using the FL words; in other words, good learners did not feel anxious when communicating in English, which endorses the results reported in Peclová’s research. Also, low-achievers were the ones who gave up studying lexis if it became too difficult for them to the highest extent, whilst it was the other way round in the case of high-achievers. It seems clear that the better the results obtained, the more efficient they consider their learning skills, so anxiety is managed better and they make a greater effort to improve FL

vocabulary. Positive beliefs mean higher achievement; teachers should then try to promote them in their classes.

5.4.2. Linguistic aspects related to vocabulary learning

In the same vein, good learners showed more definite beliefs about vocabulary since they firmly believed in the importance of cultural aspects in lexis and rejected the idea that learning a FL consisted essentially in learning its vocabulary; poor learners, however, showed more undetermined ideas. Regarding the difficulty of FL lexis, the poorer the learner, the harder to learn new words, a finding that was verified by Perclová's (2003) and Huang and Tsai's (2003) studies. It seems obvious that proficient learners are more confident and they perceive acquiring FL words as an easier task than less proficient learners, who may feel frustrated about their poor achievement.

5.4.3. Vocabulary learning and teaching

As regards vocabulary learning and teaching, several items were a source of discrepancy, especially between the poorest learners (-1000) and the rest of the groups. Indeed, the former were the ones who questioned the most the guessing of words from context and the putting of terms to use as efficient vocabulary learning techniques. At the same time, they were the ones who supported to a higher extent the memorisation of individual words.

The same is true for the results concerned with vocabulary teaching: there was a clear difference between under 1000-level learners and the rest. They defended the use of word lists and specific vocabulary tests based on frequent words more than the other learners and held slightly weaker beliefs towards those aspects

involved in mastering a word or the complementary nature of in-context and decontextualised teaching. According to this, low-achievers relied on more traditional methods, such as memorising lists of words whereas high-achievers seemed to believe in communicative activities of using context cues to infer word meaning and using already known material to assimilate it better, which has strong teaching implications.

5.5. RESEARCH QUESTION 5: What are the vocabulary learning strategies employed by Galician EFL learners?

To answer the question about Galician EFL students' concrete use of vocabulary learning strategies, an analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data was carried out.

As seen in the previous chapter, during the interviews 66% of the students claimed they were not acquainted with the notion of learning strategies and among those subjects who reported knowing this notion (34%), seventy nine per cent of them firmly believed in their effectiveness to learn vocabulary; this finding confirmed the results obtained by Fan (2003). Moreover, ninety per cent of the students were willing to be instructed in the use of this type of strategies during English lessons. This finding is extremely important for teachers since it reveals the existence of a gap between actual teaching practice and learners' expectations; which may turn out in dissatisfaction and low achievement.

Focusing on particular strategies, learners reported an overall medium usage of strategies to learn English lexis ($M=3.04$) according to the quantitative data

obtained from the questionnaires. These mean scores endorse those of previous research, such as Fan (2003), who investigated the vocabulary learning strategies of higher education students in Hong Kong, Liao (2004), who researched those of university students in Taiwan and Wei (2007), who studied those of Chinese college students, just to mention a few. Conversely, the studies conducted by Kudo (1999) with Japanese high school students, Lip (2009) with EFL post-secondary students in Hong Kong and Ruutemets (2005), who studied those of Estonian school pupils, showed a lower use of vocabulary learning strategies.

Among the five categories of strategies, students reported using metacognitive strategies most frequently (M=3.44), followed by discovery strategies (M=3.31), vocabulary use (M=2.9), vocabulary retrieval (M=2.85) and, finally, storage into memory strategies (M=2.69). It is remarkable to observe that, roughly speaking, the reported frequency of use corresponds to the belief scores obtained before: on the one hand, Galician students placed more emphasis on the belief that vocabulary asks for systematic teaching. What is more, they believed that words are mainly acquired in context and by means of the actual use of the words but they did not seem to support the memorisation of individual words, which endorses Gu and Johnson's (1996) research about Chinese learners.

The aforementioned mapping of strategies clearly supports the idea that previous assumptions about vocabulary learning exert some kind of influence over the choice of strategies. However, this is a matter for further investigation.

5.5.1. Metacognitive strategies

The importance that learner placed on regulating their own learning process was an astonishing discovery. In accordance with the mean scores of the questionnaires, learners reported being sure about the steps required to learn words, since they revealed that they knew what words to focus on to understand a text or to store into memory (M=3.55). As for the second category of management strategies to find opportunities to acquire vocabulary, they stated they reserved some time to study vocabulary (M=3.46), although in the interviews only twenty-two per cent of the students questioned admitted planning the process of vocabulary learning while seventy-eight per cent of interviewees claimed that they studied FL words alongside other aspects of the language, such as grammar.

In addition to that, they argued that they made use of all means available to understand a term, because they did not like to have doubts (M=3.83). They also denied restricting themselves to the study of words likely to be required in exams (M=2.40), confirmed by the results found in the interviews, where seventy-five per cent of them showed other interests apart from the vocabulary covered in class and resorted to different sources. This fact reinforces the previous idea that learners are really willing to learn vocabulary and somehow try to find any opportunity to learn words, which should be profited by teachers to foster students' autonomy as learners.

It must be borne in mind that in spite of being the most commonly used category of strategies, students resort to metacognitive techniques only to a

medium extent. Previous research has also shown that this group of strategies is not really widely used by students. Gu and Johnson (1996) discovered that they were relatively valuable among students and the same applies to Schmitt (1997) and Fan (2003). However, in spite of acknowledging their importance, Schmitt's (1997), Kudo's (1999) and Fan's (2003) subjects resorted to metacognitive strategies quite rarely.

5.5.2. Meaning discovery / understanding strategies

The analysis of the questionnaires and interviews showed that the strategies used to discover and understand the meaning of new terms was the second most popular category among students, although their use was reported only to medium range.

Among the four subgroups of strategies classified within this category, important differences in frequency of use were identified. Dictionary and guessing strategies were extensively used, whereas word analysis and social strategies were only moderately employed.

Firstly, dictionary strategies were frequently used to check out the meaning of unknown words and to confirm hypotheses about the possible meaning of words. What is more, students employed this tool to get to know different features of a particular lexical item, not only its meaning, and also focused on the illustrative sentences provided in order to gain an insight on how to use the word. In the same light, dictionary strategies also proved to be very popular in many studies of the kind, namely, Gu and Johnson (1996), Schmitt (1997), Kudo (1999), Fan (2003), Jiménez-Catalán (2003), Liao (2004) or Wu (2005). Conversely,

monolingual dictionaries were not as popular as bilingual ones, confirming the results obtained in the studies conducted by Kudo (1999) and Wei (2007). This may indicate that monolingual dictionaries are mainly used by those who intend to specialise in the study of this FL but their use is quite uncommon in other learning settings, such as high schools in Galicia.

Secondly, Nation (2001) postulated the use of guessing strategies as one of the best methods to learn new words, especially when dealing with low-frequency terms. In the current study, students reported an extensive use of guessing strategies entailing the employment of linguistic clues: they usually inferred the meaning of unfamiliar lexical items by reflecting upon the general topic of the concrete text or thanks to specific examples given in the text. They also looked for specific definitions provided in the text and checked their hypotheses about the meaning of the word. Qualitative data on these strategies served to illustrate particular ways in which learners made use of the context clues; this was reported by eighty per cent of the total of the students questioned. These data confirm the frequency of use reported by previous research, such as Gu and Johnson (1996), Schmitt (1997), Fan (2003) and Wu (2005).

Thirdly, the category of strategies that entails the analysis of words to infer their meaning or reasoning was used only to a moderate extent. Thus, there is only one strategy within this set widely employed: applying common sense and individual background knowledge to understand the meaning of a term. However, applying general rules known beforehand and translating the word into L1 were less popular. The scores were even lower in the case of dividing words into parts

to assimilate meaning; this was confirmed by the fact that only four per cent of the interviewees claimed to analyse words contrastively to understand new terms.

Fourthly, learners resorted moderately to social strategies, such as asking teachers or classmates to find out the meaning of new words or to embed them into a sentence to understand their use. What is more, they did not value group work as an eliciting means and only four per cent of the subjects interviewed mentioned these techniques. Similar figures were obtained by Liao (2004) and Lip (2009); Kudo (1999: 16), however, found that Japanese learners employed the social strategies of asking classmates or teachers the least because “students tend not to collaborate to learn vocabulary”. However, it is surprising to find that in the Spanish context, Jiménez-Catalán (2003) observed that asking the teacher for a L1 translation and asking classmates for word meaning were among the ten most frequently used strategies, which is not exactly in keeping with the results presented here. This finding seems to endorse the general idea that Asian students show a more individualistic way of learning while Hispanic students are apparently more sociable.

5.5.3. Vocabulary retrieval and vocabulary use strategies

The fair use of the strategies included within these two categories, i.e. vocabulary retrieval and vocabulary use, shown in the questionnaires may be an indication that students were not really acquainted with the second phase involved in knowing a word: being able to retrieve it from memory when needed and being able to use it without much effort.

Thus, the results about retrieval strategies were quite undetermined but interviews helped to shed some light on the issue: most learners (IP=45%) claimed that they were not aware of doing anything to retrieve stored terms. On the contrary, it was an automatic process or they were not able to report any strategy (IP=8%). Some learners tended to remember the context where the word was embedded when they found it (IP= 18%) or the specific learning situation (IP= 8%). A minority of them referred to the semantic associations they had created between words (IP= 7%), the loci method (IP=7%) or the mental pictures they made (IP=5%) as good ways to recall concrete words at will. So, it seems clear that it is not easy for students to reflect upon their mental processes; teachers could be of great help in this respect.

As regards the strategies that involve the use of already learnt words, questionnaires revealed moderate ratings and a slightly higher preference for the use of the mass media and technology. This result is consistent with the findings of Liao (2004) and Wei (2007) in Taiwan, whereas Ruutemets (2005) showed her astonishment about the low use of the media, specially the Internet, in the learning of new words by Estonian students. Moreover, the creation of sentences in English was even less popular in keeping with the results of Ruutemets, whose students scored even lower than in the current study. However, Jiménez-Catalán (2003) revealed that using new words in sentences were among the most popular strategies for the consolidation of meaning.

In the interviews, thirteen per cent of the learners interviewed denied employing the learnt material at all. As for the rest, they mentioned that the main

activities performed in the use of known words in the FL were mainly communicative (speaking: 35% and writing: 11%) and those facilitating the understanding of English-speaking information (media and songs, 19%; texts, 11% and videogames, 3%); this confirms the results obtained in the questionnaires.

5.5.4. Storage into memory strategies

The set of strategies reported as the least frequently used was that involving the retention of already learnt lexical items into memory, as suggested by the descriptive analysis of the replies to the questionnaires. However, this category consists of strategies very different in nature since, as stated by Schmitt (1997), two different kinds of techniques can be discerned: mechanical techniques versus strategies involving the manipulation of information to a “deep” extent. So, depending on each specific type of strategies, discrepancies in the employment of the different subcategories will be observed.

In this vein, the means obtained for more mechanical technical techniques are generally higher than those for deep processing ones, endorsing the results of previous research (Gu and Johnson, 1996 and Schmitt, 1997; Kudo, 1999; Fan, 2003). Note-taking is the most positively rated strategy of the six memory categories by students (M=3.18), followed by creating mental linkages (M=2.93), rehearsal (M=2.81), revision (M=2.44), applying images and sounds (M=2.34) and, lastly, employing action (M=1.71).

The replies obtained for the statements about note-taking strategies show that students reported taking notes in class (M=4.06) and to a lesser extent creating word lists (M=3.33), although the latter was the most popular strategy in the

interviews (IP=31%). On the contrary, the use of vocabulary cards (flashcards) was completely unpopular. These ideas are consistent with the findings of previous studies, such as Schmitt (1997) and Jiménez-Catalán (2003), where taking notes in class was a prevailing technique and flashcards were simply discarded. As for the use of word lists, they obtained a wide range of scores: in spite of the fact that Fan's (2003) results were negative regarding the use of word lists, Gu and Johnson (1996), Kudo (1999) and Wu (2005) found that that it was an extensive practice among students, just as in the case of the current study. In short, note-taking strategies, with the exception of word cards, are extensively employed world-wide. In Galicia note-taking in class by students is widely common and this is applied to every single course in the curriculum.

The second most popular category was the establishment of mental linkages between words to store them into memory either due to semantic connections, to similar spelling or to collocations; their use was only moderate. Thus, Schmitt (1997) discovered that even though students considered associative links between words as an effective tool, they resorted to them only to a medium extent, because it entails a deeper information processing. Indeed, there was just one technique extensively employed: learners created sentences or contexts in order to recall words better (M=3.52; IP=24%). On the contrary, they denied memorising word affixes (M=2.25).

Next, within the category of rehearsal, both oral (M=2.94, IP=10%) and written (M=2.64, IP=3%) repetition of words was averagely employed. All the same, repetition was confirmed by previous research (Gu and Johnson, 1996; Schmitt,

1997; Fan, 2003; Jiménez-Catalán, 2003; Liao, 2004; Ruutemets, 2005 and Wu, 2005) as an extended technique around the world.

Spaced revision of words or self-tests were not really supported by students, being the former slightly more popular than the latter. This set of strategies seems to be perceived as very popular by students but not so widely used (Fan, 2003).

Finally, the least commonly employed strategy categories, namely applying images and sounds and employing action, require deeper cognitive processing, such as in the case of creating mental pictures, semantic mapping, loci method or total physical response, to mention just a few. These findings are totally in keeping with those of Schmitt (1997), Kudo (1999), Fan (2003), Jiménez-Catalán (2003) and Liao (2004).

All in all, it is clear that students employ more strategies to discover the meaning of new words than to consolidate this knowledge and this is a potential problem: they only concentrate on solving specific meaning difficulties but then this knowledge is lost in the course of time due to its lack of consolidation and revision. This feedback endorses the conclusions rendered by Schmitt (1997) and Jiménez-Catalán (2003) about the same issue.

5.6. RESEARCH QUESTION 6: Are learners' reported vocabulary learning strategies similar to those perceived by their teachers?

Research on the participants' ideas regarding vocabulary learning strategies revealed that, in general, teachers and students seem to share similar

perceptions. Both groups (79% of the students and 63% of the total number of teachers) believed that vocabulary learning strategies were very important to improve lexical competence, as shown in the interviews. They both (90% of students and 97.7% of teachers) also agreed that they should be taught in English lessons. In short, they were really conscious about the relevance of these learning techniques.

Overall, they agreed on the extent to which vocabulary learning strategies are employed: medium usage (students' $M=3.04$ versus teachers' $M=3.15$). However, focusing on particular strategies, mean scores showed slight discrepancies. For example, students favoured more strongly metacognitive and discovery strategies ($M=3.44$ and 3.31) whereas their teachers considered discovery and storage into memory strategies as the most popular ($M=3.31$ and 3.17). In fact, metacognitive strategies were the most commonly employed by learners but teachers underestimated their use ($M=3$). Conversely, the perceived frequency of use of storage into memory strategies by instructors was slightly higher than their actual employment by students (teachers' $M=3.17$ versus learners' $M=2.69$).

Furthermore, the greatest discrepancy between teachers and their students related to the degree of autonomy of students, as shown in the amount of particular vocabulary learning strategies employed and the perceived frequency of use throughout the whole learning process. To start with, when trying to find out the meaning of unfamiliar words, there is a full agreement on the techniques mentioned by both groups but the extent of use does not match: instructors underestimate their students' autonomy to understand a new word because they

consider that most learners would simply ask for help (IP=38%), either to the teacher or to classmates, or use a dictionary (IP=30%). Finally, only some of them would try to guess meaning using contextual clues (IP= 23%) and a smaller group would analyse words comparing them to the L1 or to similar L2 words to find out the unknown meaning (IP=9%). On the contrary, as seen in the previous chapters, both guessing and dictionary strategies were extensively mentioned by learners but the social strategy of asking for help was only moderately used. In other words, what teachers think their students do most (asking for help) is exactly what learners admitted doing the least and as a last resource.

Secondly, except for the fact that storage into memory strategies were said to be employed to a greater extent than they were actually used by students, teachers and learners maintained similar views.

Thirdly, the retrieval strategies mentioned by students and instructors matched almost completely, although there was an important divergence: most learners stated that the process of retrieval was automatic and, if not, they resorted to several contextual techniques or mental associations. On the contrary, teachers referred to the aforementioned techniques but thirty per cent of them argued that if students could not remember the precise word, they would just give up trying to remember and would either translate it into a L1 term, try to explain it using other words or simply ask the teacher. This was not confirmed at all by the learners questioned, which causes a tension between one group and the other about the degree of effort made to learn English.

Fourthly, the same applies to the strategies entailing the use of already learnt terms; although in the questionnaires both learners and teachers showed virtually the same scores (students' $M=2.9$ versus teachers' $M=3.16$), in the interviews they fully agreed on the strategies mentioned; however, once again, many teachers (IP=46%) underestimated the students' use of vocabulary claiming that they just did not use FL words at all. In contrast, in the students' interviews, only thirty per cent of them admitted doing so.

Lastly and possibly most significantly is their discrepancy concerning metacognitive strategies. Roughly speaking, teachers perceived a lack of involvement of students in the regulation of their own learning process, especially in the interviews; the majority of them declared that learners never planned how to learn words and they only focused on vocabulary right before the exam. Besides, half of the instructors believed that their learners did not learn words on their own apart from those covered in class and only small minorities showed other interests in learning new words. This is in contradiction with the answers elicited from learners, who, generally speaking, showed their own initiative and personal interest in FL learning.

In conclusion, in spite of the virtually similar scores obtained, it is surprising to observe that teachers tended to underrate the degree of strategy use made by students. It seems that a certain tension between teachers and learners emerges here: while the latter declared using a wide range of resources to learn FL lexis, the former seemed to be more sceptical about their students.

5.7. RESEARCH QUESTION 7: What particular factors exert influence on the choice and use of those vocabulary learning strategies?

As explained in chapter 3, apart from surveying the vocabulary learning strategies most commonly employed by learners under study, the current research also sought to determine whether learner background variables influenced the choice and use of the aforementioned techniques.

5.7.1. Low-achievers versus high-achievers' use of VLSs

Comparing high and low achieving subjects' reported use of strategies, it could be stated that the more proficient the learner, the more extensive the use of strategies. Those learners with the highest command of vocabulary reported the highest means in all the categories of strategies considered. Indeed, it is possible to draw a correlation between students' use of strategies and the results provided by the VLT. This is consistent with the findings of Wei (2007), who also found that students with high proficiency exceeded those with low proficiency in all the categories.

Furthermore, bearing in mind the classification of students according to their proficiency level (cf. section 3.2), namely, low proficient (<1000 words), lower-intermediate (1000), upper-intermediate (2000) and high proficient (3000-5000), it seems that especially meaning discovery (low-proficient $M=3.15$ versus high-proficient $M=3.59$) and metacognitive (low-proficient $M=3.1$ versus high-proficient $M=4.05$) skills made the difference.

As regards meaning discovery strategies, guessing strategies were much more commonly reported by intermediate and high achievers than by low achievers,

especially those involving looking for examples, definitions, the logical development of the paragraph or checking hypotheses in the context in which the word is embedded to find out its meaning; all this confirmed the results of previous research (Gu and Johnson, 1996; Fan, 2003; Wei, 2007). What is more, the same applies to those techniques that involve the analysis of terms to understand their meaning; better learners reported a more extensive strategy use. Actually, the most proficient students were the only ones who confirmed deriving hypotheses about meaning by applying general rules. However, unlike the previous strategies, low achievers alone tended to translate the foreign word into the L1 to understand its meaning. So translation seems to be a strategy directly related to low-proficient learners.

In addition, low achievers also differed from high achievers in that they seemed to resort to the dictionary less often than more proficient learners; it was especially remarkable that students over 1000 words claimed to pay attention to other aspects of the word apart from its meaning, whereas students below this word level seemed to be less worried about it. Thus, dictionary strategies can also be related to high command of vocabulary, endorsing the studies of Gu and Johnson (1996), Fan (2003), and Wei (2007).

Conversely, the social strategies of asking the teacher or classmates to discover the meaning of unfamiliar words seem to relate directly to the least proficient learners. It is understandable that those who have more difficulties in developing their own autonomy in vocabulary learning depend more on other people to solve specific lexical problems.

The second set of strategies, the storage into memory ones, did not show general differences but in a closer look, several questions emerged. The most proficient students had higher scores in the strategies that involve deeper information processing, such as the creation of mental linkages. Indeed, only those over 5000-level word admitted frequent employment of word grouping (topical, situational or semantic: synonyms, antonyms...). This is consistent with the results of Schmitt (1997), who stated that more complex and meaning-focused strategies were more suitable for advanced learners than for less advanced ones. Besides, taking notes in class was more popular among the best students, endorsing the results of Gu and Johnson (1996).

As for retrieval techniques, it was found that high achievers reported a more extensive use. However, it is in the category of usage strategies, where more divergence is found. There seems to be more use of learnt items to understand the media in English among advanced learners and they were actually the ones who stated using learnt words in speech and writing as much as possible; this tendency contrasted with the low means of the rest of the students.

Finally, the other main source of discrepancy between low and high achievers was identified in the employment of metacognitive strategies. The data provided in the previous chapter suggest that the most proficient learners know how to manage their own learning process, deciding whether a word is essential to understand a text, to learn or how to use clues to interpret meaning; less proficient learners, however, felt more insecure about this. The former also reported placing more emphasis on finding any opportunity to use learnt words

whereas the latter were less persevering. Conversely, they firmly denied restricting themselves to the terms taught by the teacher or to the ones required to pass exams and solely the group of the least proficient admitted doing this to a medium extent. It seems clear that the better the learner, the more interested in the learning process, which confirms the findings of Gu and Johnson (1996), for whom the use of management strategies is an indicator of learning success.

In short, the findings discussed earlier endorse previous studies (e.g. Gu and Johnson, 1996; Schmitt, 1997; Fan, 2003; Wei, 2007) by showing how the use of vocabulary learning strategies is directly connected with learning outcomes.

5.7.2. Strategy use differences according to gender

The results obtained revealed that vocabulary learning strategy use is dependent on the learner's sex. In the former chapter, females showed a more extensive overall use of strategies, especially in the case of metacognitive skills. What is more, significant differences between female and male subjects were found in 34 out of the 61 strategies. This is consistent with the findings of Gu and Johnson (1996), Jiménez-Catalán (2003), Liao (2004) and Ruutemets (2005), where females outscored males in the number of strategies employed as well as in the category of strategies used.

On the scale of meaning discovery strategies, women resorted more to guessing strategies, especially in the case of looking for definitions or checking hypotheses about word meaning in a given context, while men's means were significantly lower. As for the subscale of analysis and reasoning techniques, the same tendency could be identified: males were more reticent to use strategies

than females, particularly in the analysis of lexical items into parts (prefixes, suffixes...) to understand its meaning, commonly employed by women but not as popular among men. This is in contradiction with the findings of Jiménez-Catalán (2003), who found that more men resorted to this strategy than women. Lastly, there was a wider and skilful dictionary use by female learners, as shown in item 55 “I pay attention to many word aspects, not only meaning”, firmly supported by women ($M=3.6$) but not so much by men ($M=3.33$). Taking into account the fact that female performed better than male learners in the VLT, it could be argued that the former take a great advantage of the strategies they use, endorsing the study of Gu and Johnson (1996), who stated that females showed more guessing and skilful dictionary use than men did.

As regards storage into memory techniques, female outscored males in many of the subscales: they resorted more to repetition both oral and written, being the latter neglected by men; they created more mental linkages between words and proceeded to spaced revisions more often. Note-taking activities were also more favoured by women, who compiled lists of words much more frequently than men, endorsing Gu and Johnson’s (1996) results regarding this strategy. Curiously enough, and in keeping with the views maintained by Jiménez-Catalán (2003), males outscored females in the use of the least frequently employed strategies, such as the total physical response method or acting out new words. Indeed, except for the previous example, Jiménez-Catalán (2003) observed a higher percentage of memory strategy use among females; she justified this variance in the choice of memory strategies by referring to the existence of different learning

styles in men and women. A similar divergence was recorded by Ruutemets (2005: 67), who stated that girls employed more frequently some of the memory techniques because they “take studying (here: memorising) words more seriously than boys. As a result, they try out a greater variety of vocabulary memorisation strategies”.

Furthermore, female students were more willing to use already learnt words to consolidate them, especially using the media. In 1996, Gu and Johnson recorded that women tried to employ terms more frequently than their male counterparts.

In addition, females demonstrated more interest in regulating their own learning process than males. In fact, not only did they show greater knowledge to discern what words are essential to understand a paragraph but they also spent more time on studying vocabulary outside the classroom, endorsing again Gu and Johnson’s results. What is more, they were the ones who showed other lexical interests out of the class and different from exam-related words, while men’s interest was substantially lower. So, as Gu and Johnson (1996) put it, it is not weird that females’ command of FL lexis surpasses that of males since they also manage, regulate and devote more time and effort to FL learning.

5.7.3. Strategy use differences according to age

The current study also revealed that the choice and employment of language learning strategies changes according to students’ age in meaning discovery, vocabulary retrieval and usage and, more particularly, in the area of metacognitive strategies. The most extensive use of strategies in four of the five

categories corresponds to students whose age range from 21 to 23 only outperformed by 24-26 year-old learners in metacognition. Anyway, all of them are voluntarily studying English and that seems to make a difference.

As regards the first category, age factor has its bearing on all of the subscales of the techniques employed to find out word meaning. The premise that the older the learner, the more extensive the use of guessing strategies applies here as well. Just as in Schmitt's (1997) study, more experienced learners showed a greater use of contextual clues to guess the meaning of words, particularly significant when compared to the group of the youngest learners (12-14 year old). Therefore, it is reasonable to think that the latter lack guessing skills due to their inexperience as language learners, which get increased as long as they get older. Moreover, the same tendency applies to word division into parts or to the application of general rules to infer meaning; there were, however, two exceptions to this general tendency: two strategies involving the contrastive analysis of FL to L1 or even translation were more widely employed by the youngest groups of learners, which seems to indicate that less experienced learners back up on their mother tongue to solve their lexical difficulties to a higher extent than more experienced students. Also, on the subscale of dictionary strategies, the older the learner, the more extensive and skilful the use of the dictionary, as demonstrated by the fact that only learners over 20 reported paying attention to many word aspects apart from meaning when using dictionaries; younger learners, however, were more dubious about this. Lastly, social strategies present remarkable results: in general, they confirm the data found by Ahmed (1980), who declared that younger

learners usually depended on the teacher's help more often than older ones; in spite of this, there was one group that made a difference: 15-17 year-old students reported asking the teacher about the meaning of a word and they also obtained one of the highest scores in asking classmates. It must be borne in mind that this was the least motivated group of students so they seem to demand only the meaning of words to overcome a concrete lexical problem by resorting either to their teachers or their classmates; however, they are not really concerned about how this word should be used. This is surely a negative practice and should be taken into account by teachers.

In the category of storage into memory strategies, there were remarkable differences among students based on age. Endorsing Schmitt's (1997) findings, younger subjects relied more on the mechanical technique of oral and written repetition whereas older subjects reported a greater use of strategies involving a deeper information processing, such as the creation of mental linkages between words (the memorisation of common affixes or embedding words into contexts for better recall). The only exception was item 71 "I create a sentence in my own language so as to link new and known words" because it was more frequently employed by younger learners. However, it is in keeping with the previous data demonstrating that the use of the L1 was more popular among the youngest subjects. Moreover, overall results showed that the techniques entailing, on the one hand, the application of images and sounds and, on the other hand, the employment of action were not really used by students; only the youngest group of students seemed to use the keyword method, to combine words by sound

similarity or to act out the meaning of new words. One plausible explanation for this is that these students have recently completed primary education and this may be a reflection of the techniques employed by primary school teachers to get pupils acquainted with English words and whose resources are normally based on pictures, drawings and sound associations. Finally, note-taking strategies presented two clearly different tendencies: flashcards were more popular among the youngest group whereas the older the learner, the more frequently they reported taking notes in class. This seems to be in keeping with the idea previously discussed since vocabulary or word cards are frequently employed in primary schools and pupils are less likely to take notes during lessons, which would explain this divergence in the use of note-taking techniques.

Similarly, significant differences were also observed between subjects in the category of usage strategies, with older learners employing more commonly already learnt words to understand the media or to communicate either verbally or in writing.

Finally, as expected, metacognitive strategies embodied the greatest divergence: older learners showed that they could manage and monitor their learning more efficiently than younger students. The other discrepancy lied in reading: older learners tended to read other materials apart from the textbook, which was not the case of younger learners. Conversely, younger learners (especially 12-14 year-old pupils) concentrated mainly on the vocabulary items taught by the teacher or that related to exams.

5.7.4. Strategy use differences according to the grade variable

In close connection with the previous factor, given the fact that the youngest learners are the ones enrolled in compulsory secondary school (ESO) or in post-compulsory secondary school (BAC), the grade factor was also a variable exerting influence on the use of vocabulary learning strategies.

Roughly speaking, university students (UNI) outscored the remaining groups in four out of five categories of strategies, with the sole exception of vocabulary usage, outperformed by learners taking other studies (OTH). So, those students who were specialising in the English language resorted more frequently to the use of strategies than the rest.

If compared to the other groups, ESO and BAC students were less willing to employ guessing strategies, to resort to dictionaries or to analyse words so as to understand their meaning; their preference for the use of translation was the only exception. This is directly related to the findings in the previous section, where younger students resorted more frequently to their L1 than the rest of the learners. In addition, it was observed that the highest usage of monolingual dictionaries corresponded to university students (UNI) whose major had to do with the English language. As explained above, this type of dictionaries is generally used by high proficient learners or teaching professionals, so this finding is fairly realistic.

As regards social strategies, the results show some inconsistency. In general, and, once again, ESO and BAC pupils were more dependent on their teachers whereas UNI and school of languages learners (EOI) were more autonomous.

Moreover, the same groups, which coincide with the least motivated subjects, were the ones with the highest means on asking a classmate about word meaning. However, 3rd-4th ESO and BAC students seemed to ask for the meaning of particular words but they were not so interested in knowing how to use them. Thus, they only need their teacher to solve a linguistic problem but they do not really seem to assimilate and learn the new terms.

Rehearsal strategies of written and oral repetition were more popular between ESO and BAC students. However, the creation of mental linkages among words was rather complex. There was a tendency among UNI, EOI and learners taking other studies (OTH) to use this type of techniques more often; the only strategy which was particularly popular among ESO and BAC learners entailed the use of the L1. Furthermore, it was really striking to see how, once again, 3rd-4th ESO and BAC learners obtained the lowest scores in this category. There seems to be a strong connection between this lack of use and motivation: since they were not worried about keeping the new terms in memory, why should they bother to draw any kind of mental linkage? Apparently, they make minor effort to find out the meaning of new words and then they do not retain them; the low scores obtained in the VLT is surely a reflection of this.

The remaining memory strategies of applying images and sounds, spaced revision and employing action were scarcely employed by all the groups, although the youngest learners (1st-2nd ESO) reflected slightly higher scores. As previously discussed, images, sounds and mimic actions are very popular in primary school teaching and this may influence their use of learning strategies, as well as the use

of vocabulary cards. However, taking notes in class was more commonly valued by UNI, EOI and OTH and the same trend was perceived in the use of already learnt terms: ESO and BAC students reported not activating vocabulary as much as the remaining groups did, which indicates a lower degree of motivation and involvement in their own learning process.

Finally, the major source of statistically relevant differences was identified in the category of metacognitive strategies. In the light of the results obtained, it could be stated that UNI, EOI and OTH students firmly believe that they are able to manage their learning process and spend more time on reading as a means of learning vocabulary, whereas ESO and BAC learners obtained significant lower scores. Conversely, the latter were the ones who focused mainly on the words taught by the teacher or required for the exam to a higher degree. In other words, there is an important divergence in the way vocabulary learning is managed: those who study FL vocabulary voluntarily show greater effort and involvement in the learning process, whereas those studying FL as a compulsory subject in the curriculum show much lower interest and effort in doing so.

5.7.5. Strategy use differences according to the period of time studying English

The last possible influential factor on the use of vocabulary learning strategies was the length or period of time devoted to the learning of English. Broadly speaking, those who had studied English for more than ten years showed the most profuse use of vocabulary strategies in four out of the five VLS categories: meaning discovery, vocabulary retrieval, vocabulary use and metacognitive categories.

They were only outscored in storage into memory strategies by those who had only learnt English up to 5 years. Conversely, the middle group (6 to 10) was the one with the lowest scores in the use of VLSs.

This pattern is repeated in guessing, analysis and dictionary strategies, whereas in the social strategy of asking the teachers for an explanation or a translation of words, the less experienced, the more dependent on the teacher.

Furthermore, experienced learners resorted more frequently to the creation of mental linkages whereas those with less experience showed stronger preferences for self-testing or the use of flashcards.

Finally, the reported overall use of metacognitive strategies by experienced learners was significantly higher than the other two groups of less experienced learners. Indeed, they stated having a clear idea of the words they are supposed to know and how to learn them. Besides, they also employed supplementary materials outside the class. However, they were the only ones who did not restrict themselves to the vocabulary taught by teachers or required for the exams.

Accordingly, it seems that students in the first years of their study of English and even more those with an extensive FL learning experience are more interested in vocabulary learning; however, those at an intermediate stage seem to be less committed to achieve it.

In the following and last chapter, conclusions and implications of the findings discussed will be presented, as well as the limitations of the current study together with some issues for future research.

Chapter 6

Conclusions

Chapter 6

Conclusions

This chapter aims to summarise the main findings in the present investigation as well as discuss the pedagogical implications that may arise from them. It also shows some of its limitations and possible suggestions for further research.

6.1. Major findings

The innovative nature of the current investigation lies in the fact that it is one of the first attempts to address the issue of beliefs about vocabulary learning held by Galician EFL learners and their use of VLSs. Moreover, it tried to draw a comparison between students' assumptions and those of their teachers in order to identify potential sources of conflict between these two groups.

Empirical evidence has allowed the researcher to render conclusions about the diversity of beliefs held by students and teachers as well as about the frequency of use of VLSs. It also revealed the role and influence of individual background variables, namely, gender, age, grade level, length of EFL instruction and vocabulary proficiency, on the beliefs and VLSs frequency of use, as outlined below:

1. Galician EFL students showed specific ideas regarding vocabulary. They reported overall high levels of motivation towards lexical acquisition, being instrumental motivation especially relevant. They also felt optimistic about future lexical achievements and highlighted the importance of cultural elements in the

vocabulary of a specific community. Moreover, as for vocabulary learning techniques, they emphasised the importance of learning words in context by using guessing strategies and, above all, putting words to use so as to assimilate them better. Lastly, students claimed that teachers should focus on vocabulary in a clear and systematic way, taking into account word morphology and word association together with the suitability of both contextualised and decontextualised teaching.

2. The beliefs about vocabulary specified by teachers did not coincide entirely with those of their students. Instructors seemed to be unaware of their students since they considered that learners were not really motivated to learn vocabulary. In fact, many teachers argued that learners only studied lexis to pass examinations and lacked any kind of either instrumental or integrative motivation. Furthermore, they did not believe either in their students' optimism about achieving future lexical goals or in the effort they supposedly made to learn vocabulary. On the other hand, teachers showed clearer assumptions about their students' learning of vocabulary, supporting contextual teaching and criticising the memorisation of individual items. However, it is necessary to point out that students have very definite ideas when it comes to identifying good teaching practice, especially when they established the need for well-structured and systematic vocabulary teaching, the importance of paying attention to word structure and the appropriateness of specific tests based on words that might be useful for the learner; teachers, however, mentioned a smaller number of

techniques and were more uncertain about the suitability and effectiveness of those strategies.

3. The vast majority of Galician EFL students and teachers highly appreciated the use of VLSs and held very positive views about vocabulary strategy training. This contrasts with the values obtained for strategy use, a category of strategies that was employed only to a medium extent. Regarding the use of specific VLSs, learners resorted more frequently to metacognitive and discovery strategies, whereas retrieval, usage and especially storage into memory VLSs were among the least popular. Even though teachers' impressions about learners' frequency of VLS use were right, they actually had a wrong impression when they pointed to the memorisation of words as the most commonly used strategies, underestimating their students' metacognitive capacity.

Teachers seemed to be in favour of promoting and even training students in the use of VLSs. However, most of them admitted they did not pay much attention to learning strategies due to time restrictions in the academic year.

4. The background variables studied have played an important role in the students' assumptions about the learning of vocabulary.

Indeed, female learners were more motivated to learn vocabulary (they liked it more and made greater effort than men), favouring reading and putting words to use; male counterparts, however, seemed to opt for the memorisation of individual items.

Learners' age was also a relevant factor. On the one hand, students over 20 showed a higher degree of motivation towards learning and using vocabulary to

communicate in English than the rest of the respondents. On the other hand, the youngest students (12-14) reported the greatest effort to learn words, making use of mechanical techniques and memorising word lists on their own; in contrast, older learners pointed to reading and learning in context as the best ways to improve their lexical command.

Furthermore, significant discrepancies were found among learners with regard to their grade level. There is a huge difference in the motivation shown by students taking compulsory studies (ESO and BAC) and non-compulsory programmes (EOI, UNI and OTH). The latter liked learning vocabulary and using it to communicate whereas the former seemed to be less committed to it. ESO students stroke a discordant note when compared to the remaining groups of learners since they were the only ones who supported the use of word memorisation, word lists and vocabulary tests based on frequently employed items. Older learners emphasised to a greater extent the importance of cultural issues and contextualised learning in lexical acquisition and preferred strategies that entailed the use of context clues.

Divergence was also identified when the students' length of EFL instruction was considered. Thus, as the years of study increase, learners report stronger beliefs about vocabulary learning. The same applies to the use of lexis to understand materials in English, the perceived difficulty of vocabulary learning and motivation. The only exception to this rule was the intermediate group (6-10 years), corresponding mainly to compulsory education students since their degree of motivation was the lowest one. Conversely, the memorisation of particular

words was mainly supported by the least experienced learners, while those students with the highest experience seemed to discard this type of VLSs.

Finally, students with different learning outcomes also contrasted in their assumptions about vocabulary. Bearing in mind the overall students' low level (1000 words), the aforementioned background variables were also crucial in the results obtained in the VLT: female outscored males (1000 vs. -1000), older learners obtained better scores than younger ones (-1000 vs. 1000, being 21 the borderline age) and lastly, non-compulsory education students outperformed compulsory education ones (ESO and BAC: -1000 vs. EOI and OTH: 1000 vs. UNI: 2000). A comparison between good and poor learners indicated that the better the learner, the higher degree of liking and motivation towards lexical acquisition and the better control of anxiety and self-perceived language aptitude. Quite on the contrary, the poorer the learner, the more prone to giving up studying and the more difficult vocabulary learning is perceived. Moreover, the usefulness of guessing word meaning in context, the importance of putting words to use and the suitability of complementing contextualised and decontextualised teaching increased as the learner's proficiency grew; memorising lists of words, however, was much more popular among the poorest students.

5. The aforementioned variables (proficiency, gender, age, grade level and length of EFL instruction) also showed a great influence on the use of VLSs. First, learners' proficiency was a crucial factor in VLS use: high achievers reported overall higher strategy use than poor learners. Moreover, both groups tended to use different strategies. Thus, within the category of discovery strategies the best

students resorted to guessing, word analysis and dictionary use, whereas low achievers were more dependent on translation into L1 or asking the teacher straight away. The same applies to metacognitive strategies: students with high vocabulary scores stated a greater command of word management, as well as finding any opportunity to employ learnt material, widening the scope of vocabulary items covered in class. Finally, one remarkable finding referred to storage into memory techniques since the best students (those with a vocabulary level above 5000 items) reported the development of meaningful groups of words and mental linkages.

The gender factor was also highly influential on the use of strategies. Female learners reported employing VLS to a greater extent than men did, especially with regard to discovery and metacognitive strategies. Women showed a stronger preference for guessing, word analysis and dictionary strategies, and they also showed greater determination to manage their own learning, encouraging the use of vocabulary and finding new paths of learning.

The age of the participants also shapes their use of VLSs to a high extent. Roughly speaking, older students resort to strategies more frequently than their younger counterparts. Going into a more detailed analysis, discrepancy was found among students regarding specific strategy categories. As for meaning discovery techniques, older learners reported a greater use of guessing and dictionary strategies whereas younger learners preferred translation into L1 or social strategies that entail asking other people to understand the meaning of new words. In the same light, older students made use of strategies to store terms into

their memory that involved deep mental processing; younger students, however, were more dependent on mechanical techniques, such as oral and written repetition. Moreover, younger students hardly ever employed vocabulary items outside the classroom but this was not the case with older learners. The latter claimed they used EFL words to understand the media and to communicate, resorting to metacognitive techniques to take control over their own learning.

The grade factor could be taken into account to draw a main division between students based on their VLS use of strategies: compulsory and post-compulsory education (ESO and BAC) as opposed to students who learn English voluntarily. The latter are the ones who employed strategies to a greater extent, especially university learners. Indeed, volunteer EFL learners employ a wide range of discovery strategies while secondary education students mainly focus on L1 translation or asking for help. In order to keep vocabulary in their memory, they are totally dependent on mechanical resources, such as repetition and the embedding of already learnt words into a L1 sentence; the techniques employed by volunteer students are, however, more sophisticated, such as the creation of meaningful mental linkages. Lastly, strategies that entail the use of already learnt vocabulary and metacognitive strategies were mostly put to work by this group of students but not by high school students, who restricted almost exclusively to the vocabulary covered in class.

The length of EFL instruction has also proven to influence the use of VLSs. Students with more than ten years of experience are the biggest users of strategies in four of the five categories, being the set of storage into memory

strategies more popular among the least experienced participants. All in all, it is remarkable to record how more experienced students are concerned with regulating their own learning as shown in their extensive use of metacognition. However, students included in the group of intermediate length of experience in learning English seem to have stagnated in the use of VLSs, since their scores were lower than those reported by less experienced learners. This will have to be addressed in subsequent pedagogical implications.

6. When examining the influence of teachers' background factors on their reported beliefs about vocabulary learning, the results elicited from them were rather homogeneous across the different variables (gender, age, grade level and EFL teaching experience). Indeed, discrepancy was only found in a rather small number of items so it could be argued that teachers generally agreed on their assumptions about the process of teaching and learning vocabulary.

6.2. Pedagogical implications

Current teaching practice has reached a consensus on placing a great emphasis on lexis in the acquisition of communicative competence. The findings of this study have demonstrated the interest that vocabulary learning arises in both students and teachers. However, this interest does not necessarily correlate with the positive outcomes in terms of vocabulary mastery.

This study has focused on surveying both students' and teachers' beliefs together with the use of diverse VLSs in order to gain insight into the current state

of affairs of EFL vocabulary teaching and learning in Galicia. The data elicited allow the researcher to put forth the resulting pedagogical implications:

1. The implementation of the communicative approach and the fostering of student-centred lessons recommended by the educational authorities cause EFL instructors to take on board not only their own ideas as teachers, but also those of their students.

This current investigation has shown that not only teachers have preconceived assumptions about how vocabulary should be learnt and taught. Learners have also been able to label teaching practices as either appropriate or inadequate. It seems, therefore, crucial for teachers to know their students' beliefs to prevent unnecessary tensions in the daily class. This knowledge will allow language teachers to model ideas that are not counterproductive to the learning process and may encourage those that facilitate it, letting learners know the reasons behind their teaching decisions.

2. Roughly speaking, students showed fairly high motivation, especially of instrumental nature and higher than teachers were able to perceive. As expected, motivational factors are more at a play among those who study English on a voluntary basis. Yet, it is remarkable to witness that the youngest pupils are more than willing to learn vocabulary; however, this willingness is somehow lost as they grow older. Therefore, teachers should make students aware of the value of knowing the EFL vocabulary and encourage its use beyond the classroom. Moreover, both the curriculum and materials used should meet the needs and

interests of learners and English lessons should become communicative enough to prevent their lack of motivation (Yang, 1999; Shen, 2006).

3. Taking into consideration the implications presented above, it is advisable that the role of the teacher should change. This study has shown that learners expect clear and systematic vocabulary teaching. Hence, as stated by Nation (2001), vocabulary acquisition is a long and continuous process and cannot be restricted only to implicit instruction whereby teachers present new words to learners and let them do everything else. Conversely, both direct and implicit vocabulary teaching should be adopted. Gu and Johnson (1996) argued that the teacher's role includes not only to provide students with materials, input and activities that favour the enhancement of lexical development but also to help them organise their mental lexicon by building connections between words. Not only should suitable lexical items be provided but also consolidated and strengthened in their minds by periodical revisions and practice.

In this light, Fan (2003) pointed out that students should be made aware of the relevance of VLSs. Indeed, the learning outcomes obtained by the students who participated in this study are rather low; this may be connected with their reported moderate use of strategies. This connection is endorsed by the fact that high achievers reported using a wider range of VLSs more frequently than poor learners.

It seems, therefore, reasonable to promote a more efficient use of strategies among students. In fact, during the interview stage the vast majority of learners admitted not being acquainted with this kind of learning aids, although they were

quite willing to receive instruction on how to use them in order to improve their academic performance. Although teachers claimed to know them and acknowledged their value, they said they did not teach them in class.

This contradiction may be due to the following reason: students are not trained in the use of VLSs because teacher training programmes do not reserve a place for this kind of instruction. This means that teachers' training schemes should be improved in the future, helping teachers to deal with VLSs and adapt them to their own way of teaching.

4. When learners are required to reflect on their own vocabulary acquisition process, they all report putting to work some sort of VLS to a greater or lesser extent. It is also true that there are major discrepancies in the use of strategies depending on individual student differences.

It seems clear that fostering this kind of reflection reinforces students' awareness of the possibility of employing concrete strategies that suit their own idiosyncrasy as individual learners. Indeed, previous studies (Horwitz, 1987; Wenden, 1987; Yang, 1999; Jiménez-Catalán, 2003; Hong, 2006; Shen, 2006) as well as the current one have shown that both learners' beliefs and their own individual differences determine the use and choice of VLSs. Therefore, teachers can provide a wide variety of VLSs in order to shape those already in use by learners to make them more effective and help them incorporate more strategies to their repertoire; in order to do that, their features and assumptions as learners should also be considered.

As stated by Gu and Johnson (1996), vocabulary acquisition is a multifaceted task which asks for a wide range of strategies at different learning stages. Not only should teachers consider students' individual features but also the specific aspects of knowing a word under study, namely, meaning discovery, storage into memory, retrieval, vocabulary use or metacognitive regulation. By doing so, the learner will become aware of their own responsibility in the learning process and will feel prepared for any aspect involved in the acquisition of every single word; this will ultimately lead to further autonomy in their own learning.

5. All the aforementioned pedagogical implications suggest that curricula designs should include strategy training in EFL lessons from very early ages. Assuming simply that students will develop their own strategies is not enough.

Teachers must carry out an explicit strategy instruction programme whereby they can explain to students why they are being trained in the use of VLSs so as to enhance their own commitment to the process of lexical acquisition.

Once students acknowledge that strategy training may improve their lexical competence, teachers can incorporate different strategies at each of the vocabulary learning stages, bearing in mind students' cognitive development.

Following the guidelines set by the teacher, especially in the case of beginners, specific activities can be done by applying concrete VLSs. If students are able to observe for themselves the effectiveness of strategies, they will be motivated to improve their lexical competence and be responsible for their own learning.

Quoting Pavičić (2008: 150):

an efficient development and employment of VLS requires a persistent cooperation between learners and teachers who have to inform each other, share experiences and knowledge, analyse problems and suggest solutions.

Therefore, it is an arduous and ongoing task. In the current teaching situation where teachers complain because EFL syllabuses are almost impossible to be covered completely due to lack of time, the aforementioned procedures can be branded as unrealistic. Yet, the actual incorporation of the VLSs in the Galician educational system is something worth spending time on since it will certainly improve the vocabulary skills of our EFL students.

6.3. Limitations of the study

In the present study the researcher has found several limitations that must be borne in mind when interpreting the results:

a. Participants: a major drawback of this study is the low number of participant teachers in comparison with the number of students (i.e. 108 versus 712, respectively). It should be remembered that they were volunteer participants and the collection of data from education professionals is rather complex and difficult. Although subjects belonged to all educational sectors under study, one may wonder whether the same results would be obtained if the number of professional participants were higher.

b. Research instruments: Several problems have been identified in the use of the research tools designed for this study. On the one hand, no matter how hard I strove to word each item in the most understandable and straightforward way, some of the statements included in the questionnaire still posed comprehension

problems for the students, especially for young learners. Therefore, in the future a change in some of the wordings with illustrative examples could be an added value.

On the other hand, as pointed out by Gu and Johnson (1996), studies that try to survey the frequency of strategy use based on questionnaires or self-reports always cast doubt on whether respondents reflect what they really do or simply answer what they think the researcher is expecting from them.

As already explained, questionnaire anonymity diminishes the possibility of false report. Nevertheless, it is certain that this possibility is still present since a 100% trustworthy research instrument does not exist. This means that the results obtained should not be regarded as totally conclusive but interpreted with caution.

Furthermore, interviews were designed as a means to supplement the information gained from the questionnaires. They served their purpose since they resulted into richer information than questionnaires. However, this information proved difficult to be scored and had to be interpreted by the researcher; this means that content analysis may have been biased to a certain extent.

c. Type of study: As previously mentioned, the data collected are based on the description given by the participants of what they think they do and not what they actually do when learning vocabulary. Hence, it would be highly recommended to introduce various tasks in the investigation whereby students had to employ VLSs in order to gain better understanding of the strategies they use and how they use them.

What is more, this study focuses on the use of strategies at a specific point in time but, as pointed out by Schmitt (1997), students' actual employment of strategies evolves over time. Hence, a longitudinal study or even observation of VLS training long-term effects should be considered.

6.4. Suggestions for further research

According to Gu and Johnson (1996), investigations of the kind usually begin with a survey on the strategies used by specific subjects, examining individual background differences to focus then on verifying the efficiency of these strategies in concrete tasks.

Then, the current cross-sectional study provided an analysis of EFL Galician learners' beliefs and VLS use by means of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, as well as a comparison drawn to the assumptions about vocabulary learning of their instructors. Therefore, it could be interesting to conduct an experimental study on strategy training to determine their effectiveness in specific contexts of EFL instruction. To this end, a greater number of teachers could be instructed in learning strategies so that they could be the ones to train their students in the use of VLSs later. Likewise, the impact of teachers' beliefs when assimilating strategy instruction and their incorporation to EFL lessons could be analysed.

Moreover, control and experimental groups of learners may be used to conduct a longitudinal study on VLS training. Such study could identify long-term effects of instruction on the use of strategies applied to specific vocabulary

learning tasks. It may also combine large-scale data and specific case studies, especially in the context of secondary education, where students are less skilful in strategy employment because of their lower cognitive development. Therefore, on the one hand, it may check whether students' cognitive development over time leads to a further deepening in VLS use. On the other hand, it may determine the degree of influence of individual characteristics (age, grade, gender...) to make the most of such training.

Empirical studies of the kind would serve to confirm and deepen the conclusions drawn in the current investigation and even clarify some important aspects of EFL lexical teaching and learning.

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Appendices

Appendices

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 17. A mellor forma de recordar palabras é a través da repetición. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. O vocabulario só pode aprenderse dentro dun contexto. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. Unha das mellores maneiras de aprender vocabulario é tentar adiviñar o significado de palabras dentro dun contexto. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. Tras atopar unha mesma palabra varias veces en contextos diferentes, xa saberás o que significa. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 21. Deberíase prestar atención aos conxuntos de frases e elementos que adoitan aparecer cunha palabra concreta. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 22. As palabras estudadas deberían empregarse antes de seren finalmente aprendidas. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 23. Facer uso dunha lingua (escoitando, falando, lendo e escribíndoa) é máis importante ca memorizar palabras. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 24. As palabras apréndense tras usalas. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

C. ENSINO DO VOCABULARIO DUNHA LINGUA ESTRANXEIRA

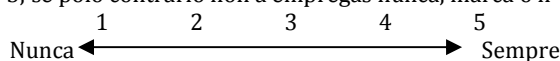
- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 25. O vocabulario non precisa dun ensino sistemático de formas e significados. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 26. Non deberían presentarse as palabras soas, senón agrupadas (en nomes, verbos..., en grupos temáticos, en familias de palabras, etc.). | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 27. O mínimo que un estudante debe coñecer dunha palabra é a súa forma, o seu significado e o seu uso básico. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 28. É importante analizar a estrutura das palabras. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 29. O profesor debería seleccionar unha cantidade de palabras e facer listas para que os alumnos as aprendesen. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 30. O papel do profesor consiste principalmente en explicar o significado das palabras no contexto onde aparezan. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 31. O papel do profesor consiste en fomentar a autonomía dos seus alumnos proporcionándolles estratexias que lles axuden a adiviñar o significado das palabras e a memorizalas. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 32. O papel do profesor consiste en ensinarlle aos seus alumnos estratexias que lles permitan adiviñar o significado das palabras no contexto onde aparezan. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 33. Débese completar o ensino de palabras fóra de contexto co ensino de palabras dentro dun contexto. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

D. A AVALIACIÓN DA COMPETENCIA LÉXICA

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 34. Os tests para avaliar o vocabulario deben basearse en listas de frecuencia. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 35. Non deberían empregarse tests de vocabulario como tales para avaliar o coñecemento e uso do vocabulario. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

III. Estratexias de aprendizaxe do vocabulario

Gustaríanos que completases este cuestionario sobre o que fas realmente cando estás estudando o vocabulario do inglés. Aparecen aquí técnicas de aprendizaxe, ferramentas ou estratexias que probablemente empregas para estudar o vocabulario. Emprega a escala seguinte para responder: Se sempre empregas a estratexia que che describimos, rodea o nº 5; se polo contrario non a empregas nunca, marca o nº 1.



- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 36. Tento adiviñar o significado de palabras en inglés que me son descoñecidas fixándome no contexto onde aparecen. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 37. Busco calquera exemplo que apareza no contexto cando tento achar o significado dunha palabra descoñecida. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 38. Fago uso do desenvolvemento lóxico do contexto (por exemplo, causa-efecto) cando tento achar o significado dunha palabra descoñecida. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 39. Busco palabras ou expresións dentro da mesma pasaxe que apoiem a miña teoría sobre o significado dunha palabra. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 40. Busco definicións ou paráfrases dentro do mesmo que apoiem a miña teoría sobre o significado dunha palabra. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 41. Tento probar o significado da palabra que adiviñei inseríndoa no contexto onde aparece para ver se é correcto. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Appendices

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|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 42. Tento adiviñar o significado da palabra descoñecida dividíndoa en partes (prefixos, raíz, sufixos...) que coñezo. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 43. Fago hipóteses sobre o significado das palabras aplicando regras xerais que coñezo de antes. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 44. Analizo certos elementos da palabra (sons, raíces...) comparándoos co galego e/ou co español. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 45. Tento comprender o significado de palabras descoñecidas en inglés traducíndoas ao galego e/ou ao español. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 46. Fago uso do sentido común e de coñecementos previos cando tento comprender o significado de palabras descoñecidas | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 47. Cando atopo unha palabra que me é descoñecida unha e outra vez, búscoa no dicionario. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 48. Cando quero confirmar a miña hipótese sobre o significado dunha palabra, búscoa no dicionario. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 49. Busco no dicionario palabras que son esenciais para entender o significado da oración ou parágrafo no que aparecen inseridas. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 50. Cando busco unha palabra no dicionario, leo as oracións que veñen exemplificando os diversos significados desa palabra. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 51. Consulto o dicionario para achar as diferenzas sutís que hai nos diversos significados das palabras en inglés. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 52. Se a palabra descoñecida ten desinencias, eu quítoollas para poder quedarme coa forma orixinal que buscar no dicionario. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 53. Fago uso de dicionarios de inglés monolingües. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 54. Cando atopo unha palabra que me é descoñecida, pídlle ao profesor/a que ma traduza ao galego e/ou ao español. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 55. Cando atopo unha palabra que me é descoñecida, pídlle ao profesor/a que me faga unha paráfrase ou que me dea un sinónimo en galego e/ou en español. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 56. Cando atopo unha palabra que me é descoñecida, pídlle ao profesor/a que ma insira dentro dunha oración a modo de exemplo. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 57. Cando atopo unha palabra que me é descoñecida, pregúntolle aos meus compañeiros de clase o seu significado. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 58. Cando atopo unha palabra que me é descoñecida, adoito descubrir o seu significado por medio de actividades que facemos en grupo. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 59. Cando tento memorizar unha palabra, repítoa a min mesmo en voz alta. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 60. Repetir como soa unha palabra que me é descoñecida éme suficiente para poder lembrala. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 61. Cando tento memorizar unha palabra, escriboa repetidas veces. Memorizo como se deletrea letra por letra. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 62. Agrupo novas palabras en inglés para poder lembralas. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 63. Agrupo novas palabras en inglés en categorías (por exemplo, animais, verduras...) para poder recordalas. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 64. Acostumo a recordar grupos de palabras que teñen unha parte que se escribe igual. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 65. Analizo as distintas partes das palabras (prefixos, raíces, sufixos) e memorizo os prefixos e sufixos máis comúns. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 66. Asocio unha nova palabra en inglés con outra que xa coñezo e que se lle parece. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 67. Tento crear redes semánticas na miña mente e lembrar palabras en grupos significativos. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 68. Cando atopo unha palabra nova, busco na miña memoria para ver se teño algún sinónimo ou antónimo no vocabulario xa aprendido. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 69. Fago unha oración na miña propia lingua para poder asociar unha palabra nova con outra que xa coñezo. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 70. Cando tento recordar unha palabra, adoito recordar a oración na que apareceu. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 71. Aprendo mellor as palabras cando as insiro dentro dun contexto (por exemplo, en frases, en oracións, en contos...). | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 72. Creo unha imaxe mental ou debuxo da nova palabra que me axude a lembrala. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 73. Acostumo a recordar as novas palabras ou frases en inglés memorizando a súa localización concreta dentro da páxina, no encerado ou en calquera outro lugar no que aparecese. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Appendices

74. Debuxo un “mapa” ou diagrama no que represento a relación a nivel do significado entre unha palabra central e outras relacionadas, empregando liñas ou frechas para poder recordalas.
1 2 3 4 5
75. Para poder recordar unha nova palabra en inglés, primeiro busco unha palabra na miña lingua que soe parecida á que estou tratando de recordar. Logo, creo unha imaxe visual na que interactúan a palabra nova e a da miña propia lingua.
1 2 3 4 5
76. Asocio unha palabra nova en inglés con outra que xa coñeza tamén en inglés que soe parecida.
1 2 3 4 5
77. Invento rimas para poder recordar novas palabras en inglés, aínda que non teñan sentido ningún.
1 2 3 4 5
78. Fago revisións regulares e estruturadas das palabras en inglés que xa memoricei.
1 2 3 4 5
79. Fágome tests de vocabulario a min mesmo/a de cando en vez.
1 2 3 4 5
80. Atribúo certas sensacións físicas ás palabras que estou tratando de recordar.
1 2 3 4 5
81. Escenifico fisicamente o significado das novas palabras en inglés para poder recordalas.
1 2 3 4 5
82. Fago listas de vocabulario coas novas palabras que vou atopando.
1 2 3 4 5
83. Escribo a palabra nova nun lado dunha tarxeta e o seu significado no outro.
1 2 3 4 5
84. Tomo notas en clase das palabras en inglés que me son descoñecidas para poder recordalas.
1 2 3 4 5
85. Agrupo as palabras inglesas que xa aprendín en torno a unha situación concreta (por exemplo, “na cociña”, “na escola”, etc.) para logo poder recuperalas da memoria.
1 2 3 4 5
86. Agrupo as palabras inglesas que xa aprendín en grupos semánticos (sinónimos, antónimos, familias de palabras...) para logo poder recuperalas da memoria.
1 2 3 4 5
87. Fíxome nas palabras que normalmente van coa palabra que estou a aprender para memorizalas e logo poder recuperalas da memoria
1 2 3 4 5
88. Tento ler e facer uso de material en inglés (cancións, películas, prensa...) para poder empregar as palabras que veño de aprender en inglés.
1 2 3 4 5
89. Invento frases empregando as palabras que acabo de aprender en inglés.
1 2 3 4 5
90. Tento empregar todo o que podo as palabras que acabo de aprender en inglés tanto na fala coma na escrita.
1 2 3 4 5
91. Tento empregar todo o que podo as palabras que acabo de aprender en inglés en situacións reais ou imaxinarias
1 2 3 4 5
92. Invento novas palabras en inglés (ben totalmente inventadas da nada, ben derivadas ou ben compostas) para ser capaz expresarme e poder vencer así as miñas limitacións en canto ao vocabulario.
1 2 3 4 5
93. Sei cando unha nova palabra ou frase é esencial para a adecuada comprensión dunha pasaxe.
1 2 3 4 5
94. Sei cales son as palabras que é importante que aprenda.
1 2 3 4 5
95. Cando atopo unha palabra ou frase que me é descoñecida, teño claro se é importante que a recorde ou non.
1 2 3 4 5
96. Sei que claves debo empregar para poder descubrir o significado dunha determinada palabra.
1 2 3 4 5
97. Ademais dos libros de texto, leo outros libros en inglés que me interesan.
1 2 3 4 5
98. Só aprendo aquel vocabulario que me manda o profesor/a.
1 2 3 4 5
99. Só presto atención ao vocabulario directamente relacionado cos exames.
1 2 3 4 5
100. Emprego varios medios para esclarecer aquelas palabras das que non estou moi seguro.
1 2 3 4 5

Poderías mencionar outras estratexias ou técnicas que empregues cando tentas aprender vocabulario en inglés?

MOITAS GRAZAS POLA TÚA COOPERACIÓN. SE QUERES MENCIONAR ALGO MÁIS, PODES FACELO AQUÍ.

APPENDIX 2: Student Vocabulary Learning Strategy Questionnaire: Pilot study (English version)



VOCABULARY LEARNING: LEARNERS' QUESTIONNAIRE

The present questionnaire is part of a research project aimed at investigating both the assumptions about learning the vocabulary of English as a foreign language and the vocabulary learning strategies of Galician students and teachers, that is to say, what learners do to learn English vocabulary. We would be very grateful if you could answer the questions below.

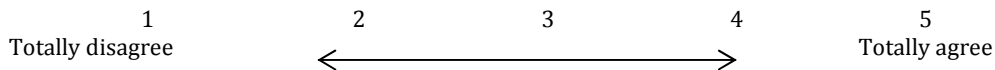
I. Background Information

Please, answer these questions first, before you continue on to the following questionnaire. Circle one:

1. Full name:
2. Sex: Male Female
3. Age:
4. Grade: 3º ESO 2º BAC 2º Universidade 5º Universidade
5. Years you have studied English: 5 or less +5 10 +10

II. Beliefs about Vocabulary Learning

Within the framework of your EFL learning, circle the option from the column that best expresses your opinion regarding vocabulary teaching and learning. You have to choose a number according to the following scale: if you totally agree, circle nº 5; if you totally disagree, circle nº 1.



A. LINGUISTIC ASPECTS

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6. The vocabulary of the language I'm studying is difficult. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. Learning a foreign language is essentially learning its vocabulary. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. Vocabulary is less important than grammar in the process of learning English. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. Vocabulary constitutes a structured framework easy to describe. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. Vocabulary only makes sense within a context. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. The culture of a particular community is reflected in its vocabulary. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

B. LEARNING EFL VOCABULARY

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 12. Learning vocabulary is hard and takes a great effort. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. Vocabulary is essentially learnt through reading. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. Anyone can expand his vocabulary simply through reading a lot. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. Vocabulary must be completely learnt through self-learning. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. Learning a big amount of vocabulary can only be obtained by memorising individual words. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. Repetition is the best way to remember words. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. Vocabulary can only be learnt within a context. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. Guessing words in context is one of the best ways to learn vocabulary. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. When one comes across a word several times in different contexts, one will know what it means. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 21. Attention should be paid to phrasal sets and elements that generally go with a particular word. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 22. Words studied should be put to use before they are finally learnt. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Appendices

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 50. When looking up a word in the dictionary, I read the sample sentences illustrating various meanings of the word. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 51. I look up words in a dictionary to find out about the subtle differences in the meanings of English words. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 52. If the new word is inflected, I remove the inflections to recover the original form to look up. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 53. I make use of English monolingual dictionaries. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 54. When facing an unfamiliar English word, I ask the teacher for a translation in my native language. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 55. When facing an unfamiliar English word, I ask the teacher for a paraphrase or synonym in my native language. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 56. When facing an unfamiliar English word, I ask the teacher for a sentence including the new word. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 57. When facing an unfamiliar English word, I ask my classmates for its meaning. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 58. When facing an unfamiliar English word, I discover its meaning through group work activities. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 59. When trying to memorise a word, I repeat it aloud to myself. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 60. Repeating the sound of a new word to myself would be enough for me to remember the word. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 61. When I try to memorise a word, I write it repeatedly. I memorise the spelling of a word letter by letter. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 62. I group new English words together so as to remember them. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 63. I group new English words into categories (e.g. animals, vegetables...) so as to remember them. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 64. I remember a group of new words that share a similar part in spelling. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 65. I analyse word parts (prefixes, stems, suffixes) and memorise the most commonly used prefixes and suffixes. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 66. I associate a new word to a known English word that looks similar. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 67. I try to create semantic networks in my mind and remember words in meaningful groups. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 68. When I encounter a new word, I search in my memory and see if I have any synonyms and antonyms in my vocabulary stock. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 69. I create a sentence in my own language when I try to link a new word to a known word. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 70. When I try to remember a word, I remember the sentence in which the word is used. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 71. I learn words better when I put them in contexts (e.g. phrases, sentences, stories...). | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 72. I create a mental image of the new word to help me remember it. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 73. I remember new English words or phrases by remembering their location on the page, on the board, etc. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 74. I draw a "map" or diagram in which I represent the semantic relationship between a central word and the related ones by means of lines or arrows so as to remember them. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 75. I remember a new English word by identifying a familiar word in my own language that sounds like the new English one that I am trying to remember. Then, I create a visual image of the new word and the native familiar one interacting. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 76. I associate a new word with a known English word that sounds similar. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 77. I create rhymes to remember new English words, even if they do not make sense at all. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 78. I have regular and structured reviews of new words I have memorised. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 79. I test myself with word test from time to time. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 80. I attach physical sensations to certain words when I try to remember them. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

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- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 81. I physically act out new English words so as to remember them. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 82. I make vocabulary lists of new words that I encounter. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 83. I write the new words on one side of a card and their explanations on the other side. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 84. I take down notes in class of unfamiliar English terms so as to remember them. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 85. I group the already learnt words in English in situational sets so as to retrieve them from memory. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 86. I group the already learnt words in English in semantic sets (synonyms, antonyms, coordinates...) so as to retrieve them from memory. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 87. I pay attention to the collocational sets that surround the English unfamiliar term and memorise them so as to retrieve them from memory. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 88. I try to read and make use of English-language media (songs, movies, press...) so that I can make use of the words that I tried to remember. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 89. I make up my own sentences using the words I just learnt. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 90. I try to use the recently learnt words as much as possible in speech and writing. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 91. I try to use the newly learnt words in either real or imaginary situations. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 92. I make up a new English word (either totally new, a derived one or a compound one) so as to express myself overcoming my own vocabulary limitations. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 93. I know when a new word or phrase is essential for adequate comprehension of a passage. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 94. I know which words are important for me to learn. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 95. When I meet a new word or phrase, I have a clear sense of whether I need to remember it. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 96. I know what cues I should use in guessing the meaning of a particular word. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 97. Besides textbooks, I look for other readings of my interest. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 98. I do not learn the vocabulary that my English teacher does not tell us to learn. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 99. I only focus on vocabulary that is directly related to examinations. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 100. I use various means to make clear words that I am not very sure of. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Could you mention any other strategy or technique that you use when trying to learn English vocabulary?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR COOPERATION. IF THERE IS ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE TO MENTION, PLEASE DO SO BELOW.

APPENDIX 3: Teacher Vocabulary Learning Strategy Questionnaire: Pilot study (Galician version)



O ENSINO DO VOCABULARIO: CUESTIONARIO PARA O PROFESORADO

Este cuestionario forma parte dun proxecto de investigación que ten como obxectivo analizar tanto as ideas sobre a aprendizaxe do vocabulario do inglés como lingua estranxeira, coma as estratexias de aprendizaxe de vocabulario de estudantes e profesores galegos, é dicir, como aprenden vocabulario do inglés os que están a estudar esta lingua. Estariámosche moi agradecidos se respondese as preguntas que seguen.

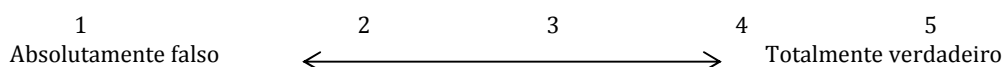
I. Información persoal

Por favor, contesta primeiro estas preguntas antes de continuar co cuestionario. Debuxa un círculo arredor da resposta correcta:

1. Sexo: Home Muller
2. Idade:
3. Curso: 3º ESO 2º BAC 2º Universidade 5º Universidade
4. Anos ensinando inglés: 5 ou menos +5 10 +10
5. Centro de ensino:

II. Ideas sobre a aprendizaxe do vocabulario

No marco do proceso de aprendizaxe de inglés como lingua estranxeira, debuxa un círculo arredor da resposta que mellor exprese a túa opinión en relación ao ensino e aprendizaxe do vocabulario. Emprega a escala seguinte para responder: Se estás completamente de acordo coa resposta, rodea o nº 5; se estás completamente en desacordo coa resposta, marca o nº 1.



A. ASPECTOS LINGÜÍSTICOS

6. Creo que o vocabulario da lingua que estou a aprender é difícil. 1 2 3 4 5
7. Aprender unha lingua estranxeira consiste esencialmente en aprender o seu vocabulario. 1 2 3 4 5
8. O vocabulario é menos importante que a gramática na aprendizaxe do inglés. 1 2 3 4 5
9. O vocabulario constitúe un esquema estruturado fácil de describir. 1 2 3 4 5
10. O vocabulario só ten sentido dentro dun contexto. 1 2 3 4 5
11. A cultura dunha comunidade concreta vese reflectida no seu vocabulario. 1 2 3 4 5

B. APRENDIZAXE DE VOCABULARIO DUNHA LINGUA ESTRANXEIRA

12. A aprendizaxe do vocabulario é unha tarefa difícil chea de esforzo. 1 2 3 4 5
13. O vocabulario apréndese basicamente a través da lectura. 1 2 3 4 5
14. Calquera pode mellorar o seu nivel de vocabulario simplemente lendo moito. 1 2 3 4 5
15. O vocabulario debe aprenderse completamente a través da auto-aprendizaxe. 1 2 3 4 5
16. Aprender unha grande cantidade de vocabulario só se pode lograr por medio da memorización de palabras concretas. 1 2 3 4 5
17. A mellor forma de recordar palabras é a través da repetición. 1 2 3 4 5
18. O vocabulario só pode aprenderse dentro dun contexto. 1 2 3 4 5

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19. Unha das mellores maneiras de aprender vocabulario é tentar adiviñar o significado de palabras dentro dun contexto. 1 2 3 4 5
20. Tras atopar unha mesma palabra varias veces en contextos diferentes, xa saberás o que significa. 1 2 3 4 5
21. Deberíase prestar atención aos conxuntos de frases e elementos que adoitan aparecer cunha palabra concreta. 1 2 3 4 5
22. As palabras estudadas deberían empregarse antes de seren finalmente aprendidas. 1 2 3 4 5
23. Facer uso dunha lingua (escoitando, falando, lendo e escribíndoa) é máis importante ca memorizar palabras. 1 2 3 4 5
24. As palabras apréndense tras usalas. 1 2 3 4 5

C. ENSINO DO VOCABULARIO DUNHA LINGUA ESTRANXEIRA

25. O vocabulario non precisa dun ensino sistemático de formas e significados. 1 2 3 4 5
26. Non deberían presentarse as palabras soas, senón agrupadas (en nomes, verbos..., en grupos temáticos, en familias de palabras, etc.). 1 2 3 4 5
27. O mínimo que un estudante debe coñecer dunha palabra é a súa forma, o seu significado e o seu uso básico. 1 2 3 4 5
28. É importante analizar a estrutura das palabras. 1 2 3 4 5
29. O profesor debería seleccionar unha cantidade de palabras e facer listas para que os alumnos as aprendesen. 1 2 3 4 5
30. O papel do profesor consiste principalmente en explicar o significado das palabras no contexto onde aparezan. 1 2 3 4 5
31. O papel do profesor consiste en fomentar a autonomía dos seus alumnos proporcionándolles estratexias que lles axuden a adiviñar o significado das palabras e a memorizalas. 1 2 3 4 5
32. O papel do profesor consiste en ensinarlle aos seus alumnos estratexias que lles permitan adiviñar o significado das palabras no contexto onde aparezan. 1 2 3 4 5
33. Débese completar o ensino de palabras fóra de contexto co ensino de palabras dentro dun contexto. 1 2 3 4 5

D. A AVALIACIÓN DA COMPETENCIA LÉXICA

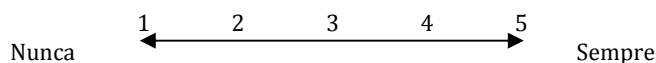
34. Os tests para avaliar o vocabulario deben basearse en listas de frecuencia. 1 2 3 4 5
35. Non deberían empregarse tests de vocabulario como tales para avaliar o coñecemento e uso do vocabulario. 1 2 3 4 5

III. Estratexias de aprendizaxe de vocabulario

No 1990, Rebecca Oxford definiu as estratexias de aprendizaxe coma “operacións empregadas polo aprendiz que lle axuden na adquisición, almacenamento, recuperación e uso da información” (Oxford, 1990: 8). O proceso da aprendizaxe do vocabulario implica 4 pasos básicos:

1. Comprensión /descubrimiento do significado do vocabulario
2. Almacenamento do vocabulario
3. Recuperación do vocabulario
4. Emprego do vocabulario

Neste senso, gustaríanos que completases este cuestionario sobre aquelas estratexias de aprendizaxe do vocabulario que realmente cres que os teus alumnos empregan cando tentan aprender o vocabulario do inglés. Usa a escala seguinte para responder: Se sempre empregas a estratexia que che describimos, rodea o nº 5; se polo contrario non a empregas nunca, marca o nº 1.



36. Os meus alumnos fan uso de estratexias de aprendizaxe de vocabulario para poder comprender ou descubrir o significado daquelas palabras que lle son descoñecidas. 1 2 3 4 5
37. Os meus alumnos fan uso de estratexias de aprendizaxe de vocabulario para poder almacenar na memoria as palabras que están tentando aprender. 1 2 3 4 5

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38. Os meus alumnos fan uso de estratexias de aprendizaxe de vocabulario para poder recuperar da memoria cando lles sexa necesario as palabras que xa aprenderon. 1 2 3 4 5
39. Os meus alumnos fan uso de estratexias de aprendizaxe de vocabulario para poder empregar cando lles sexa necesario as palabras que xa aprenderon. 1 2 3 4 5
40. Os meus alumnos fan uso de estratexias de aprendizaxe de vocabulario para poder regular o seu propio proceso de aprendizaxe de vocabulario. 1 2 3 4 5

Poderías mencionar outras estratexias ou técnicas que os teus alumnos poidan empregar cando tentan aprender vocabulario en inglés?

MOITAS GRAZAS POLA TÚA COOPERACIÓN. SE QUERES MENCIONAR ALGO MÁIS, PODES FACELO AQUÍ.

APPENDIX 4: Teacher Vocabulary Learning Strategy Questionnaire: Pilot study (English version)



VOCABULARY LEARNING: TEACHERS' QUESTIONNAIRE

The present questionnaire is part of a research project aimed at investigating both the assumptions about learning the vocabulary of English as a foreign language and the vocabulary learning strategies of Galician students and teachers, that is to say, what learners do to learn English vocabulary. We would be very grateful if you could answer the questions below.

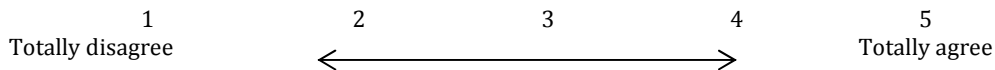
I. Background Information

Please, answer these questions first, before you continue on to the following questionnaire. Circle one:

1. Full name:
2. Sex: Male Female
3. Age:
4. Grade: 3º ESO 2º BAC 2º Universidade 5º Universidade
5. Years you have taught English: 5 or less +5 10 +10

II. Beliefs about Vocabulary Learning

Within the framework of your EFL learning, circle the option from the column that best expresses your opinion regarding vocabulary teaching and learning. You have to choose a number according to the following scale: if you totally agree, circle nº 5; if you totally disagree, circle nº 1.



A. LINGUISTIC ASPECTS

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6. The vocabulary of the language I'm studying is difficult. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. Learning a foreign language is essentially learning its vocabulary. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. Vocabulary is less important than grammar in the process of learning English. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. Vocabulary constitutes a structured framework easy to describe. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. Vocabulary only makes sense within a context. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. The culture of a particular community is reflected in its vocabulary. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

B. LEARNING EFL VOCABULARY

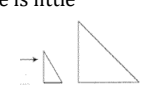
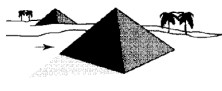




- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 12. Learning vocabulary is hard and takes a great effort. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. Vocabulary is essentially learnt through reading. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. Anyone can expand his vocabulary simply through reading a lot. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. Vocabulary must be completely learnt through self-learning. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. Learning a big amount of vocabulary can only be obtained by memorising individual words. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. Repetition is the best way to remember words. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. Vocabulary can only be learnt within a context. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. Guessing words in context is one of the best ways to learn vocabulary. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. When one comes across a word several times in different contexts, one will know what it means. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 21. Attention should be paid to phrasal sets and elements that generally go with a particular word. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 22. Words studied should be put to use before they are finally learnt. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

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APPENDIX 5: Vocabulary Levels Test

1000 LEVEL TEST A

Instrucción: Aquí hai 39 preguntas. Pon unha cruz no "T" se cres que a oración é verdadeira. Pon unha cruz no "N" se cres que a oración non é verdadeira. Pon unha cruz no "X" se non entendes a oración.

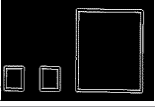
<p>Aquí tes un exemplo.</p>	<p>Example: We cut time into minutes, hours, and days.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> T (This is True)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> N (This is Not true)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> X (I do Not understand the question)</p>
<p>1. This one is little</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <p style="text-align: center;"> <input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X </p>	<p>2. You can find these everywhere</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <p style="text-align: center;"> <input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X </p>
<p>3. Some children call their mother Mama.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> <input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X </p>	<p>4. Show me the way to do it means 'show me how to do it.'</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> <input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X </p>
<p>5. This country is part of the world.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> <input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X </p>	<p>6. This can keep people away from your house.</p> <div style="text-align: right;">  </div> <p style="text-align: center;"> <input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X </p>
<p>7. When something falls, it goes up.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> <input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X </p>	<p>8. Most children go to school at night.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> <input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X </p>
<p>9. It is easy for children to remain still.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> <input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X </p>	<p>10. One person can carry this.</p> <div style="text-align: right;">  </div> <p style="text-align: center;"> <input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X </p>
<p>11. A scene is part of a play.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> <input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X </p>	<p>12. People often think of their home, when they are away from it.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> <input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X </p>
<p>13. There is a mountain in every city.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> <input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X </p>	<p>14. Every month has the same number of days.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> <input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X </p>
<p>15. A chief is the youngest person in a group.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> <input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X </p>	<p>16. Black is a colour.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> <input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X </p>
<p>17. You can use a pen to make marks on paper.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> <input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X </p>	<p>18. A family always has at least two people.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> <input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X </p>
<p>19. You can go by road from London to New York.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> <input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X </p>	<p>20. Silver costs a lot of money.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> <input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X </p>
<p>21. This is a hill.</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <p style="text-align: center;"> <input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X </p>	<p>22. This young person is a girl.</p> <div style="text-align: right;">  </div> <p style="text-align: center;"> <input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X </p>

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23. We can be sure that one day we will die. <input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X	24. A society is made up of people living together. <input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X
25. An example can help you understand. <input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X	26. Some books have pictures in them. <input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X
27. When some people attack other people, they try to hurt them. <input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X	28. When something is ancient, it is very big. <input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X
29. Big ships can sail up a stream. <input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X	30. It is good to keep a promise. <input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X
31. People often dream when they are sleeping. <input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X	32. This is a date - 10 o'clock. <input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X
33. When something is impossible, it is easy to do it. <input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X	34. Milk is blue. <input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X
35. A square has five sides. <input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X	36. Boats are made to travel on land. <input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X
37. Cars cannot pass each other on a wide road. <input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X	38. When you look at something closely, you can see the details. <input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X
39. This part is a handle.	
<input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X 	

1000 LEVEL TEST B

Instruccions: Aquí hai 39 preguntas. Pon unha cruz no "T" se cres que a oración é verdadeira. Pon unha cruz no "N" se cres que a oración non é verdadeira. Pon unha cruz no "X" se non entendes a oración.

Aquí tes un exemplo.	Example: We can stop time. <input type="checkbox"/> T (This is True) <input type="checkbox"/> N (This is Not true) <input type="checkbox"/> X (I do Not understand the question)
1. Two of these are little. <input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X 	2. You must look when you want to find the way. <input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X
3. When someone says, 'What are you called?', you should say your name. <input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X	4. There are many ways to get money. <input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X
5. All the world is under water. <input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X	6. When you keep asking, you ask once. <input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X
7. Sometimes people die when they fall off a building. <input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X	8. Day follows night and night follows day. <input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X

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<p>9. <i>Remain here</i> means 'stay'.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X</p>	<p>10. This is a person.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X </p>
<p>11. When there is a change of scene, we see a different place.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X</p>	<p>12. <i>Often</i> means 'many times'.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X</p>
<p> 13. This is a mountain.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X</p>	<p>14. Every month has a different name.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X</p>
<p>15. People follow the orders of a chief.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X</p>	<p>16. Green is a colour.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X</p>
<p>17. Dirty hands cannot make marks on glass.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X</p>	<p>18. You need at least five people to make a group.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X</p>
<p>19. Cars move on a road.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X</p>	<p>20. You can eat silver.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X</p>
<p>21. You can see more when you are on a hill.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X</p>	<p>22. Your child will be a girl or a boy.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X</p>
<p>23. When you are sure, you know you are right.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X</p>	<p>24. Each society has the same rules.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X</p>
<p>25. Three examples of food are: shops, homes, and markets.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X</p>	<p>26. This is a picture.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X </p>
<p>27. It is good to attack people.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X</p>	<p>28. Rome is an ancient city.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X</p>
<p>29. A stream is a small river.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X</p>	<p>30. When you promise something, you say you will really do it.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X</p>
<p>31. Dreams are about things that really happened.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X</p>	<p>32. When we give a date, we say the day, the month, and the year.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X</p>
<p>33. It is impossible to live for a long time without water.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X</p>	<p>34. Very young children drink milk.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X</p>
<p>35. This is a square</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X </p>	<p> 36. This is a boat.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X</p>
<p>37. It is a short way from one side to the other side of a wide river.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X</p>	<p>38. A detail is a small piece of information.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X</p>
<p>39. A handle is part of our body.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> X</p>	

Appendices

2000 LEVEL TEST A

Instrucción: Emparella cada definición coa palabra correspondente. Se non a sabes, por favor, déixaa en branco.

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| 1. birth | |
| 2. dust | ----- game |
| 3. operation | ----- winning |
| 4. row | ----- being born |
| 5. sport | |
| 6. victory | |
| | |
| 1. choice | |
| 2. crop | ----- heat |
| 3. flesh | ----- meat |
| 4. salary | ----- money paid regularly for doing a job |
| 5. secret | |
| 6. temperature | |
| | |
| 1. cap | |
| 2. education | ----- teaching and learning |
| 3. journey | ----- numbers to measure with |
| 4. parent | ----- going to a far place |
| 5. scale | |
| 6. trick | |
| | |
| 1. attack | |
| 2. charm | ----- gold and silver |
| 3. lack | ----- pleasing quality |
| 4. pen | ----- not having something |
| 5. shadow | |
| 6. treasure | |
| | |
| 1. cream | |
| 2. factory | ----- part of milk |
| 3. nail | ----- a lot of money |
| 4. pupil | ----- person who is studying |
| 5. sacrifice | |
| 6. wealth | |
| | |
| 1. adopt | |
| 2. climb | ----- go up |
| 3. examine | ----- look at closely |
| 4. pour | ----- be on every side |
| 5. satisfy | |
| 6. surround | |
| | |
| 1. bake | |
| 2. connect | ----- join together |
| 3. inquire | ----- walk without purpose |
| 4. limit | ----- keep within a certain size |
| 5. recognize | |
| 6. wander | |
| | |
| 1. burst | |
| 2. concern | ----- break open |
| 3. deliver | ----- make better |
| 4. fold | ----- take something to someone |
| 5. improve | |
| 6. urge | |
| | |
| 1. original | |
| 2. private | ----- first |
| 3. royal | ----- not public |
| 4. slow | ----- all added together |
| 5. sorry | |
| 6. total | |

Appendices

2000 LEVEL TEST B

Instrucción: Emparella cada definición coa palabra correspondente. Se non a sabes, por favor, déixaa en branco.

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| 1. copy | |
| 2. event | ----- end or highest point |
| 3. motor | ----- this moves a car |
| 4. pity | ----- thing made to be like another |
| 5. profit | |
| 6. tip | |
| | |
| 1. accident | |
| 2. debt | ----- loud deep sound |
| 3. fortune | ----- something you must pay |
| 4. pride | ----- having a high opinion of yourself |
| 5. roar | |
| 6. thread | |
| | |
| 1. clerk | |
| 2. frame | ----- a drink |
| 3. noise | ----- office worker |
| 4. respect | ----- unwanted sound |
| 5. theatre | |
| 6. wine | |
| | |
| 1. dozen | |
| 2. empire | ----- chance |
| 3. gift | ----- twelve |
| 4. opportunity | ----- money paid to the government |
| 5. relief | |
| 6. tax | |
| | |
| 1. admire | |
| 2. complain | ----- make wider or longer |
| 3. fix | ----- bring in for the first time |
| 4. hire | ----- have a high opinion of someone |
| 5. introduce | |
| 6. stretch | |
| | |
| 1. arrange | |
| 2. develop | ----- grow |
| 3. lean | ----- put in order |
| 4. owe | ----- like more than something else |
| 5. prefer | |
| 6. seize | |
| | |
| 1. blame | |
| 2. elect | ----- make |
| 3. jump | ----- choose by voting |
| 4. manufacture | ----- become like water |
| 5. melt | |
| 6. threaten | |
| | |
| 1. brave | |
| 2. electric | ----- commonly done |
| 3. firm | ----- wanting food |
| 4. hungry | ----- having no fear |
| 5. local | |
| 6. usual | |
| | |
| 1. bitter | |
| 2. independent | ----- beautiful |
| 3. lovely | ----- small |
| 4. merry | ----- liked by many people |
| 5. popular | |
| 6. slight | |

2000 LEVEL TEST C

Instrucción: Enche os ocos coa palabra que corresponda.

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 ch_____ 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 bu_____.
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.

Appendices

3000 LEVEL TEST A

Instrucción: Emparella cada definición coa palabra correspondente. Se non a sabes, por favor, déixaa en branco.

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| 1. belt | |
| 2. climate | ----- idea |
| 3. executive | ----- inner surface of your hand |
| 4. notion | ----- strip of leather worn around the waist |
| 5. palm | |
| 6. victim | |
| | |
| 1. acid | |
| 2. bishop | ----- cold feeling |
| 3. chill | ----- farm animal |
| 4. ox | ----- organization or framework |
| 5. ridge | |
| 6. structure | |
| | |
| 1. bench | |
| 2. charity | ----- long seat |
| 3. jar | ----- help to the poor |
| 4. mate | ----- part of a country |
| 5. mirror | |
| 6. province | |
| | |
| 1. boot | |
| 2. device | ----- army officer |
| 3. lieutenant | ----- a kind of stone |
| 4. marble | ----- tube through which blood flows |
| 5. phrase | |
| 6. vein | |
| | |
| 1. apartment | |
| 2. candle | ----- a place to live |
| 3. draft | ----- chance of something happening |
| 4. horror | ----- first rough form of something written |
| 5. prospect | |
| 6. timber | |
| | |
| 1. betray | |
| 2. dispose | ----- frighten |
| 3. embrace | ----- say publicly |
| 4. injure | ----- hurt seriously |
| 5. proclaim | |
| 6. scare | |
| | |
| 1. encounter | |
| 2. illustrate | ----- meet |
| 3. inspire | ----- beg for help |
| 4. plead | ----- close completely |
| 5. seal | |
| 6. shift | |
| | |
| 1. assist | |
| 2. bother | ----- help |
| 3. condemn | ----- cut neatly |
| 4. erect | ----- spin around quickly |
| 5. trim | |
| 6. whirl | |
| | |
| 1. annual | |
| 2. concealed | ----- wild |
| 3. definite | ----- clear and certain |
| 4. mental | ----- happening once a year |
| 5. previous | |
| 6. savage | |
| | |
| 1. dim | |
| 2. junior | ----- strange |
| 3. magnificent | ----- wonderful |
| 4. maternal | ----- not clearly lit |
| 5. odd | |
| 6. weary | |

Appendices

3000 LEVEL TEST B

Instrucción: Emparella cada definición coa palabra correspondente. Se non a sabes, por favor, déixaa en branco.

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| 1. bull | |
| 2. champion | ----- formal and serious manner |
| 3. dignity | ----- winner of a sporting event |
| 4. hell | ----- building where valuable objects are shown |
| 5. museum | |
| 6. solution | |
| | |
| 1. blanket | |
| 2. contest | ----- holiday |
| 3. generation | ----- good quality |
| 4. merit | ----- wool covering used on beds |
| 5. plot | |
| 6. vacation | |
| | |
| 1. administration | |
| 2. angel | ----- group of animals |
| 3. frost | ----- spirit who serves God |
| 4. herd | ----- managing business and affaires |
| 5. fort | |
| 6. pond | |
| | |
| 1. atmosphere | |
| 2. counsel | ----- advise |
| 3. factor | ----- a place covered with grass |
| 4. hen | ----- female chicken |
| 5. lawn | |
| 6. muscle | |
| | |
| 1. abandon | |
| 2. dwell | ----- live in a place |
| 3. oblige | ----- follow in order to catch |
| 4. pursue | ----- leave something permanently |
| 5. quote | |
| 6. resolve | |
| | |
| 1. assemble | |
| 2. attach | ----- look closely |
| 3. peer | ----- stop doing something |
| 4. quit | ----- cry out loudly in fear |
| 5. scream | |
| 6. toss | |
| | |
| 1. drift | |
| 2. endure | ----- suffer patiently |
| 3. grasp | ----- join wool threads together |
| 4. knit | ----- hold firmly with your hands |
| 5. register | |
| 6. tumble | |
| | |
| 1. brilliant | |
| 2. distinct | ----- thin |
| 3. magic | ----- steady |
| 4. naked | ----- without clothes |
| 5. slender | |
| 6. stable | |
| | |
| 1. aware | |
| 2. blank | ----- usual |
| 3. desperate | ----- best or most important |
| 4. normal | ----- knowing what is happening |
| 5. striking | |
| 6. supreme | |

Appendices

3000 LEVEL TEST C

Instruccions: Enche os ocios coa palabra que corresponda.

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 amusing 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 thru_____ 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 bath na_____.

Appendices

5000 LEVEL TEST A

Instrucción: Emparella cada definición coa palabra correspondente. Se non a sabes, por favor, déixaa en branco.

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| 1. balloon | ----- bucket |
| 2. federation | ----- unusual interesting thing |
| 3. novelty | ----- rubber bag that is filled with air |
| 4. pail | |
| 5. veteran | |
| 6. ward | |
| | |
| 1. alcohol | ----- stage of development |
| 2. apron | ----- state of untidiness or dirtiness |
| 3. hip | ----- cloth worn in front to protect your clothes |
| 4. lure | |
| 5. mess | |
| 6. phase | |
| | |
| 1. apparatus | ----- expression of admiration |
| 2. compliment | ----- set of instruments or machinery |
| 3. ledge | ----- money received by the government |
| 4. revenue | |
| 5. scrap | |
| 6. tile | |
| | |
| 1. bulb | ----- female of horse |
| 2. document | ----- large group of soldiers or people |
| 3. legion | ----- a paper that provides information |
| 4. mare | |
| 5. pulse | |
| 6. tub | |
| | |
| 1. concrete | ----- circular shape |
| 2. era | ----- top of a mountain |
| 3. fiber | ----- a long period of time |
| 4. loop | |
| 5. plank | |
| 6. summit | |
| | |
| 1. blend | ----- mix together |
| 2. devise | ----- plan or invent |
| 3. hug | ----- hold tightly in your arms |
| 4. lease | |
| 5. plague | |
| 6. reject | |
| | |
| 1. abolish | ----- bring to an end by law |
| 2. drip | ----- guess about the future |
| 3. insert | ----- clam or comfort someone |
| 4. predict | |
| 5. soothe | |
| 6. thrive | |
| | |
| 1. bleed | ----- come before |
| 2. collapse | ----- fall down suddenly |
| 3. precede | ----- move with quick steps and jumps |
| 4. reject | |
| 5. skip | |
| 6. tease | |
| | |
| 1. casual | ----- sweet-smelling |
| 2. desolate | ----- only one of its kind |
| 3. fragrant | ----- good for your health |
| 4. radical | |
| 5. unique | |
| 6. wholesome | |
| | |
| 1. gloomy | ----- empty |
| 2. gross | ----- dark or sad |
| 3. infinite | ----- without end |
| 4. limp | |
| 5. slim | |
| 6. vacant | |

Appendices

5000 LEVEL TEST B

Instrucción: Emparella cada definición coa palabra correspondente. Se non a sabes, por favor, déixaa en branco.

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| 1. analysis | ----- eagerness |
| 2. curb | ----- loan to buy a house |
| 3. gravel | ----- small stones mixed with sand |
| 4. mortgage | |
| 5. scar | |
| 6. zeal | |
| | |
| 1. circus | ----- musical instrument |
| 2. jungle | ----- seat without a back or arms |
| 3. nomination | ----- speech given by a priest in a church |
| 4. sermon | |
| 5. stool | |
| 6. trumpet | |
| | |
| 1. artillery | ----- a kind of tree |
| 2. creed | ----- system of belief |
| 3. hydrogen | ----- large gun on wheels |
| 4. maple | |
| 5. pork | |
| 6. streak | |
| | |
| 1. chart | ----- map |
| 2. forge | ----- large beautiful house |
| 3. mansion | ----- place where metals are made and shaped |
| 4. outfit | |
| 5. sample | |
| 6. volunteer | |
| | |
| 1. contemplate | ----- think about deeply |
| 2. extract | ----- bring back to health |
| 3. gamble | ----- make someone angry |
| 4. launch | |
| 5. provoke | |
| 6. revive | |
| | |
| 1. demonstrate | ----- have a rest |
| 2. embarrass | ----- break suddenly into small pieces |
| 3. heave | ----- make someone feel shy or nervous |
| 4. obscure | |
| 5. relax | |
| 6. shatter | |
| | |
| 1. correspond | ----- exchange letters |
| 2. embroider | ----- hide and wait for someone |
| 3. lurk | ----- feel angry about something |
| 4. penetrate | |
| 5. prescribe | |
| 6. resent | |
| | |
| 1. decent | ----- weak |
| 2. frail | ----- concerning a city |
| 3. harsh | ----- difficult to believe |
| 4. incredible | |
| 5. municipal | |
| 6. specific | |
| | |
| 1. adequate | ----- enough |
| 2. internal | ----- fully grown |
| 3. mature | ----- alone away from other things |
| 4. profound | |
| 5. solitary | |
| 6. tragic | |

5000 LEVEL TEST C

Instrucción: Enche os ocos coa palabra que corresponda.

1. Soldiers usually swear an oa _____ of loyalty to their country.
2. The voter placed the ball _____ in the box.
3. They keep their valuables in a vau _____ at the bank.
4. A bird perched at the window led _____.
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 that 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 ig _____ 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.

Appendices

III. APRENDIZAXE DO VOCABULARIO DUNHA LINGUA ESTRANXEIRA

- A22. A auto-aprendizaxe é a mellor maneira de aprender o vocabulario dunha lingua estranxeira.
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
- A23. O vocabulario dunha lingua estranxeira apréndese basicamente a través da lectura.
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
- A24. O significado dunha palabra só pode obterse dentro dun contexto concreto, polo tanto o novo vocabulario só pode aprenderse dentro dun contexto.
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
- A25. Podes chegar a aprender palabras novas dunha lingua estranxeira simplemente ao atopalas varias veces en contextos diferentes.
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
- A26. Unha das mellores maneiras de aprender vocabulario é tentar adiviñar o significado de palabras dentro dun contexto.
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
- A27. Aprender unha grande cantidade de vocabulario só se pode lograr a través da memorización de palabras.
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
- A28. Á hora de aprender vocabulario, deberíamos prestar atención aos conxuntos de frases e palabras que acostuman a aparecer co termo concreto que estamos tentando aprender.
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
- A29. Máis que estudándoo, o vocabulario dunha lingua estranxeira apréndese ao usalo (escoitando, falando, lendo e escribindo).
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|

IV. ENSINO DO VOCABULARIO DUNHA LINGUA ESTRANXEIRA

- A30. O mínimo que un estudante debería chegar a coñecer dunha palabra é a súa forma, o seu significado e o seu uso básico, non só a palabra equivalente na súa lingua.
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
- A31. O vocabulario dunha lingua estranxeira debe ensinar-se dun xeito claro e sistemático.
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
- A32. As palabras que van ser ensinadas deben presentarse aos alumnos agrupadas (en nomes, verbos..., en grupos temáticos, en familias de palabras, etc.), e non de unha en unha.
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
- A33. É importante prestar atención á estrutura formal das palabras para poder aprendelas e ensinalas mellor.
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
- A34. Se se vai ensinar vocabulario fóra dun contexto concreto, sempre debe completarse co ensino de palabras dentro de contexto.
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
- A35. É boa idea que o profesor seleccione as palabras que quere ensinar e faga unha lista con elas para que os alumnos as aprendan.
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
- A36. No ensino do vocabulario dunha lingua estranxeira, o papel do profesor consiste principalmente en explicar aos seus alumnos o significado das palabras no contexto onde aparecen.
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
- A37. No ensino do vocabulario dunha lingua estranxeira, o papel do profesor consiste principalmente en fomentar a autonomía dos seus alumnos proporcionándolles técnicas que lles permitan aprender e empregar logo correctamente o vocabulario adquirido.
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|

V. A AVALIACIÓN

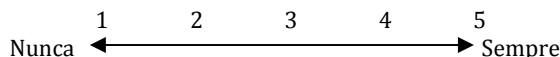
- A38. Paréceme ben que o profesor/a empregue tests específicos para avaliar o coñecemento e o correcto emprego do vocabulario en inglés.
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
- A39. Os tests para avaliar o vocabulario en inglés deben basearse en listas das palabras que se empreguen con maior frecuencia.
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
- A40. No deseño dos tests de avaliación do vocabulario, é máis importante a utilidade das palabras que a frecuencia de aparición desas palabras.
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|

MOITAS GRAZAS POLA TÚA COOPERACIÓN. SE QUERES MENCIONAR ALGO MÁIS, PODES FACELO AQUÍ.

Appendices

B. Estratexias de aprendizaxe do vocabulario

Gustaríanos que completases este cuestionario sobre o que fas realmente cando estás estudando o vocabulario do inglés. Aparecen aquí técnicas de aprendizaxe, ferramentas ou estratexias que probablemente usas para estudar o vocabulario. Emprega a escala seguinte para responder: Se sempre empregas a estratexia que che describimos, rodea o nº 5; se polo contrario non a empregas nunca, marca o nº 1.



I. COMPRESIÓN / DESCUBRIMENTO

➤ Adiviñar:

B41. Tento adiviñar o significado de palabras que non coñezo fixándome no contexto e teño en conta o tema do parágrafo no que aparecen. 1 2 3 4 5

B42. Busco calquera exemplo que apareza no contexto para tentar achar o significado dunha palabra descoñecida 1 2 3 4 5

B43. Para poder descubrir o significado dunha palabra descoñecida, tento atopar o desenvolvemento lóxico do parágrafo no que se atopa (por exemplo, causa-efecto, acción-consecuencia...; case sempre marcadas por conectadores tipo: “sen embargo, aínda que, por tanto...”). 1 2 3 4 5

B44. Busco palabras, expresións, definicións ou paráfrases dentro da pasaxe onde apareceu a palabra que descoñezo que apoien a miña hipótese sobre o seu significado. 1 2 3 4 5

B45. Probo o significado da palabra que adiviñei meténdoo no contexto onde aparece para ver se é correcto. 1 2 3 4 5

B46. Tento adiviñar o significado da palabra descoñecida dividíndoa en partes (prefixos, raíz, sufixos...) que coñezo de antes. 1 2 3 4 5

➤ Análise / Razoamento:

B47. Fago hipóteses sobre o significado de palabras descoñecidas aplicando regras xerais que coñezo de antes. 1 2 3 4 5

B48. Fago uso do sentido común e de coñecementos previos cando tento comprender o significado de palabras descoñecidas 1 2 3 4 5

B49. Analizo certos elementos da palabra (sons, raíces, prefixos...) comparándoos co galego e/ou co castelán. 1 2 3 4 5

B50. Tento comprender o significado de palabras descoñecidas traducíndoas ao galego e/ou ao español. 1 2 3 4 5

➤ Dicionario:

B51. Cando atopo unha palabra que me é descoñecida, búscalo no dicionario. 1 2 3 4 5

B52. Cando quero comprobar se a miña hipótese sobre o significado dunha palabra era correcta, búscalo no dicionario. 1 2 3 4 5

B53. Só busco no dicionario palabras que son esenciais para entender o significado da oración ou parágrafo no que aparecen inseridas. 1 2 3 4 5

B54. Cando busco unha palabra no dicionario, leo as oracións que veñen exemplificando os diversos significados desa palabra. 1 2 3 4 5

B55. Consulto o dicionario non só para achar o significado de palabras descoñecidas, senón que tamén me fixo noutros aspectos coma o seu equivalente en español/galego, a súa pronunciación, os seus derivados, os contextos nos que se emprega máis frecuentemente, etc. 1 2 3 4 5

B56. Fago uso de dicionarios de inglés monolingües. 1 2 3 4 5

➤ Petición de axuda:

B57. Cando atopo unha palabra que non coñezo, pídolle ao profesor/a que ma traduza ao galego e/ou ao español ou que me explique o que significa. 1 2 3 4 5

B58. Cando atopo unha palabra que non coñezo, pídolle ao profesor/a que ma insira dentro dunha oración a modo de exemplo para clarificar o seu significado. 1 2 3 4 5

B59. Cando atopo unha palabra que non coñezo, prefiro preguntarlle aos meus compañeiros de clase o seu significado. 1 2 3 4 5

B60. Cando atopo unha palabra que me é descoñecida, acostumo a descubrir o seu significado por medio de actividades que facemos en grupo. 1 2 3 4 5

II. ALMACENAMENTO NA MEMORIA

➤ Práctica

B61. Cando tento memorizar unha palabra, repítoa a min mesmo en voz alta. 1 2 3 4 5

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B62. Cando tento memorizar unha palabra, escribo repetidas veces. Memorizo cómo se deletrea letra por letra.

1 2 3 4 5

➤ Creación de vínculos mentais

B63. Agrupo palabras que teñen relación entre si para axudarme a lembralas.

1 2 3 4 5

B64. Agrupo palabras relacionadas cun mesmo tema (por exemplo: *Computing: computer, monitor, software...*) para poder lembralas.

1 2 3 4 5

B65. Agrupo palabras e expresións relacionadas con certas situacións (por exemplo: *Bank: cash, cheque, open an account...*) para poder lembralas.

1 2 3 4 5

B66. Acostumo a recordar grupos de palabras que teñen unha parte que se escribe igual (*happy, happily, unhappy, happiness*).

1 2 3 4 5

B67. Analizo as distintas partes das palabras (prefixos, raíces, sufixos) e memorizo os prefixos e sufixos máis comúns.

1 2 3 4 5

B68. Acostumo a fixarme nas palabras que normalmente acompañan ao termo que estou a aprender e tento lembralos coma se fosen expresións feitas.

1 2 3 4 5

B69. Tento crear redes semánticas na miña mente e lembrar palabras en grupos significativos.

1 2 3 4 5

B70. Cando atopo unha palabra nova, busco na miña memoria para ver se teño algún sinónimo ou antónimo no vocabulario xa aprendido.

1 2 3 4 5

B71. Fago unha oración na miña propia lingua para poder asociar unha palabra nova con outra que xa coñezo.

1 2 3 4 5

B72. Cando tento recordar unha palabra, acostumo a recordar a oración na que apareceu.

1 2 3 4 5

B73. Aprendo mellor as palabras cando as insiro dentro dun contexto (por exemplo, en frases, en oracións, en contos...).

1 2 3 4 5

➤ Aplicación de imaxes e sons

B74. Creo unha imaxe ou debuxo da nova palabra na miña imaxinación que me axude a lembrala.

1 2 3 4 5

B75. Acostumo a recordar as novas palabras ou expresións en inglés memorizando a súa localización concreta dentro da páxina, no encerado ou en calquera outro lugar no que aparecera.

1 2 3 4 5

B76. Debuxo un gráfico ou diagrama no que represento a relación a nivel do significado entre unha palabra central e outras relacionadas, empregando liñas ou frechas para poder recordalas.

1 2 3 4 5

B77. Para poder recordar unha nova palabra en inglés, primeiro busco unha palabra na miña lingua que soe parecida á que estou tratando de recordar. Logo, creo unha imaxe visual na que interactúan a palabra nova e a da miña propia lingua.

1 2 3 4 5

B78. Asocio unha palabra nova en inglés con outra que xa coñezo tamén en inglés que soe parecida (por exemplo: (*family /familiar, goat/coat...*)).

1 2 3 4 5

B79. Invento rimas para poder recordar novas palabras en inglés, aínda que non teñan sentido ningún.

1 2 3 4 5

➤ Revisión:

B80. Reviso de cando en cando as palabras en inglés que xa memoricei.

1 2 3 4 5

B81. Fágome tests de vocabulario a min mesmo/a de cando en vez.

1 2 3 4 5

➤ Emprego da acción:

B82. Asocio a palabra que estou tratando de lembrar á sensación física que sentía no momento de atopala (frío, sono, bosquexo...).

1 2 3 4 5

B83. Escenifico fisicamente (fago a acción que indica o verbo que estou a estudar, por exemplo) o significado das novas palabras en inglés para poder recordalas.

1 2 3 4 5

➤ Toma de notas

B84. Fago listas de vocabulario coas novas palabras que vou atopando.

1 2 3 4 5

B85. Escribo a palabra nova nun lado dunha tarxeta e o seu significado no outro.

1 2 3 4 5

B86. Tomo nota en clase das palabras en inglés que non coñecía para poder recordalas.

1 2 3 4 5

Appendices

III. RECUPERACIÓN DO VOCABULARIO

B87. Acostumo a facer uso das palabras inglesas que xa aprendín agrupadas en torno a unha situación concreta (por exemplo: *Bank: open an account, cheque, cash...*) para poder recuperalas da memoria.

1 2 3 4 5

B88. Acostumo a facer uso das palabras inglesas que xa aprendín en grupos semánticos (sinónimos, antónimos, familias de palabras...) para poder recuperalas da memoria.

1 2 3 4 5

B89. Acostumo a facer uso das palabras que normalmente van co termo e que memoricei coma expresións feitas para poder recuperalo da memoria.

1 2 3 4 5

IV. EMPREGO DO VOCABULARIO

B90. Tento ler e facer uso de material en inglés (cancións, películas, prensa...) para poder empregar as palabras que veño de aprender.

1 2 3 4 5

B91. Invento frases empregando as palabras que veño de aprender en inglés.

1 2 3 4 5

B92. Tento empregar todo o que podo as palabras que veño de aprender en inglés tanto na fala coma na escrita, en situacións reais e imaxinarias.

1 2 3 4 5

B93. Cando quero dicir algo e non sei a palabra que teño que utilizar, invento unha palabra nova en inglés (ben totalmente inventada da nada, ben derivada ou ben composta) para ser capaz expresarme e poder vencer así as miñas limitacións en canto ao vocabulario.

1 2 3 4 5

V. ESTRATEXIAS METACOGNITIVAS

B94. Sei cando unha nova palabra ou frase é esencial para a adecuada comprensión dunha pasaxe.

1 2 3 4 5

B95. Cando atopo unha palabra ou frase que non coñezo, teño claro se é importante que a recorde ou non.

1 2 3 4 5

B96. Sei que claves debo empregar para poder descubrir o significado dunha determinada palabra.

1 2 3 4 5

B97. Cando me poño a estudar inglés, reservo tempo para dedicarlle ao estudo do vocabulario.

1 2 3 4 5

B98. Ademais dos libros de texto, leo outros libros, xornais, revistas... en inglés que me interesan.

1 2 3 4 5

B99. Só aprendo aquel vocabulario que me manda o profesor/a.

1 2 3 4 5

B100. Só presto atención ao vocabulario directamente relacionado cos exames.

1 2 3 4 5

B101. Emprego tódolos medios para tentar saber que significan aquelas palabras das que non estou moi seguro, non me gusta quedarme con dúbidas.

1 2 3 4 5

Poderías mencionar outras estratexias ou técnicas que empregues cando tentas aprender vocabulario en inglés?

MOITAS GRAZAS POLA TÚA COOPERACIÓN. SE QUERES MENCIONAR ALGO MÁIS, PODES FACELO AQUÍ.

Unha última cuestión: Estarías disposto/a a manter unha breve entrevista comigo? De ser así, por favor, escribe aquí o teu nome e número de teléfono.

APPENDIX 7: Student Vocabulary Learning Strategy Questionnaire (SVLSQ-English version)



VOCABULARY LEARNING: LEARNERS' QUESTIONNAIRE

The present questionnaire is part of a research project aimed at investigating both the assumptions about learning the vocabulary of English as a foreign language and the vocabulary learning strategies of Galician students and teachers, that is to say, what learners do to learn English vocabulary. We would be very grateful if you could answer the questions below.

I. Background Information

Please, answer these questions first, before you continue on to the following questionnaire. Circle one:

1. Full name:
2. Sex: Male Female
3. Age:
4. Form:
5. Years you have studied English: 0-5 6-10 11+
6. Learning Institution:

A. Beliefs about Vocabulary Learning

Within the framework of your EFL learning, circle the option from the column that best expresses your opinion regarding vocabulary teaching and learning. You have to choose a number according to the following scale: if you totally agree, circle nº 5; if you totally disagree, circle nº 1.



I. MOTIVATIONAL ASPECTS

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| A7. I like learning the vocabulary of this foreign language. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| A8. I like using the vocabulary I have already learnt outside classroom. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| A9. I learn English vocabulary mainly because I think it will be very useful to find a good job . | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| A10. I learn English vocabulary so as to be able to understand movies, songs, videogames, etc. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| A11. I learn English vocabulary so as to be able to communicate with foreign friends/relatives. I would like to meet English speakers from all around the world. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| A12. I think I am very good at learning English vocabulary. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| A13. Every time I have to pass an examination, I feel that I do not master enough English vocabulary. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| A14. I feel anxious every time I have to speak in English in class and I do not know the English word I want to say to make myself clear. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| A15. If I think the new English vocabulary we are learning is too difficult, I always give up and do not study it, or I only study the easiest part of it. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| A16. If the teaching materials for vocabulary learning are too boring or I do not like them, I do not pay much attention. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| A17. I really make a great effort to learn English vocabulary. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

II. LINGUISTIC ASPECTS

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| A18. The cultural ideas of a particular community, the way they see reality, are inevitably reflected in the vocabulary of their language. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| A19. Learning a foreign language is essentially learning its vocabulary. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| A20. The role of vocabulary in the development of the foreign language competence is less important than other aspects such as grammar. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| A21. I think English vocabulary is difficult to learn. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

III. FOREIGN LANGUAGE VOCABULARY LEARNING

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| A22. Self-learning is the best way to learn the vocabulary of a foreign language. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| A23. Vocabulary is essentially learnt through reading. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| A24. Words make sense only within a particular context, so new vocabulary can only be learnt in context. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| A25. You will be able to learn new target words simply after coming across them several times in different contexts. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Appendices

B46. I try to find out the meaning of a new word by dividing it into chunks (prefix, root, suffix...) that I understand. 1 2 3 4 5

➤ Analysing / Reasoning:

B47. I derive hypothesis about the meaning of words by applying general rules that I already know. 1 2 3 4 5

B48. I make use of my common sense and previous knowledge when trying to understand the meaning of new words. 1 2 3 4 5

B49. I analyse certain elements (sounds, roots, prefixes...) by comparing them to Galician or Spanish words. 1 2 3 4 5

B50. I understand the meaning of unfamiliar English words by translating them into Galician or Spanish. 1 2 3 4 5

➤ Dictionary:

B51. Whenever I see an unfamiliar word, I look it up in a dictionary 1 2 3 4 5

B52. When I want to confirm my guess about the meaning of a word, I look it up in a dictionary. 1 2 3 4 5

B53. I only look up words that are crucial to the understanding of the sentence or paragraph in which they are embedded. 1 2 3 4 5

B54. When looking up a word in the dictionary, I read the sample sentences illustrating all the senses of the word. 1 2 3 4 5

B54. When I consult a dictionary, I pay attention not only to the meaning of the word, but also to other aspects of word knowledge, such as its Galician/Spanish equivalent, its pronunciation, its derivatives, frequent contexts of occurrence, etc. 1 2 3 4 5

B55. I make use of English monolingual dictionaries. 1 2 3 4 5

➤ Asking for help:

B56. When facing an unfamiliar English word, I ask the teacher for an explanation or a translation in Galician/Spanish. 1 2 3 4 5

B57. When facing an unfamiliar English word, I ask the teacher for a sentence including the new word so as to illustrate its meaning. 1 2 3 4 5

B58. When facing an unfamiliar English word, I'd rather ask my classmates for its meaning. 1 2 3 4 5

B59. When facing an unfamiliar English word, I discover its meaning through group work activities. 1 2 3 4 5

II. STORAGE INTO MEMORY

➤ Rehearsal

B60. When trying to memorise a word, I repeat it aloud to myself. 1 2 3 4 5

B61. When trying to memorise a word, I write it down several times. I memorise how it is spelt letter by letter. 1 2 3 4 5

➤ Creating mental linkages

B62. I group new English words together so as to remember them. 1 2 3 4 5

B63. I group new English words and expressions related to the same topic (for instance: *Computing: computer, monitor, software...*) so as to remember them. 1 2 3 4 5

B64. I group new English words and expressions related to the same everyday life situation (for instance: *Bank: cash, cheque, open an account...*) so as to remember them. 1 2 3 4 5

B65. I remember a group of new words that share a similar part in spelling (*happy, happily, unhappy, happiness*). 1 2 3 4 5

B66. I analyse word parts (prefixes, stems, suffixes) and memorise the most commonly used prefixes and suffixes. 1 2 3 4 5

B67. I pay attention to the words that normally go with the word I am learning and try to remember them as if they were a fixed expression. 1 2 3 4 5

B68. I try to create semantic networks in my mind and remember words in meaningful groups. 1 2 3 4 5

B69. When I encounter a new word, I search in my memory to check if I have any synonyms and antonyms in my vocabulary stock. 1 2 3 4 5

B70. I create a sentence in my own language so as to link a new word to a known word. 1 2 3 4 5

B71. When I try to remember a word, I remember the sentence in which the word is used. 1 2 3 4 5

Appendices

- B72. I learn words better when I put them in contexts (e.g. phrases, sentences, stories...).
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
- Applying images and sounds
- B73. I create a mental image or drawing of the new word to help me remember it.
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
- B74. I remember new English words or expressions by remembering their location on the page, on the board, etc.
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
- B75. I draw a "map" or diagram in which I represent the semantic relationship between a central word and the related ones by means of lines or arrows so as to remember them.
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
- B76. I remember a new English word by identifying a familiar word in my own language that sounds like the new English one that I am trying to remember. Then, I create a visual image of the new word and the native familiar one interacting.
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
- B77. I associate a new word with a known English word that sounds similar (for instance: *family* // *familiar*, *goat/coat*...).
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
- B78. I create rhymes to remember new English words, even if they do not make sense at all.
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
- Review
- B79. I have reviews from time to time of new words I have memorised.
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
- B80. I test myself with word tests from time to time.
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
- Employing action
- B81. I associate the word I am trying to remember to the physical sensation I was experimenting when I first met it (coldness, tiredness, joy...).
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
- B82. I physically act out the meaning of new English words so as to remember them (for instance, I make the action of the verb I am studying).
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
- Note taking
- B83. I make vocabulary lists of new words that I meet.
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
- B84. I write the new words on one side of a card and their explanations on the other side.
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
- B85. I take down notes in class of unfamiliar English terms so as to remember them.
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
- ### III. VOCABULARY RETRIEVAL
- B86. I make use of the already learnt words in English in situational sets so as to retrieve them from memory (for instance: *Bank: open an account, cheque, cash*...).
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
- B87. I make use of the already learnt words in English in semantic sets (synonyms, antonyms, word families...) so as to retrieve them from memory.
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
- B88. I make use of the words that usually surround the English term I have already memorised as a fixed expression so as to retrieve it from memory.
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
- ### IV. VOCABULARY USE
- B89. I try to read and resort to English-language media (songs, movies, press...) so that I can make use of the words that I have already learnt.
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
- B90. I make up my own sentences in English using the words I have just learnt.
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
- B91. I try to use the newly learnt words as much as possible in speech and writing, either in real or in imaginary situations.
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
- B92. When I want to say something and I do not know the exact word, I make up a new English word (either totally new, a derived one or a compound one) so as to express myself overcoming my own vocabulary limitations.
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
- ### V. METACOGNITIVE REGULATION
- B93. I know when a new word or phrase is essential for adequate comprehension of a passage.
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
- B94. When I come across a new word or expression, I know whether it is important for me to learn it or not.
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
- B95. I know which cues I should use in guessing the meaning of a particular word.
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
- B96. When I study English, I always reserve time to study vocabulary.
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
- B97. Besides textbooks, I look for other readings (books, newspapers, magazines...) of my interest.
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|

Appendices

B98. I only learn the vocabulary that my English teacher tells me to learn.

1 2 3 4 5

B100. I only focus on vocabulary that is directly related to examinations.

1 2 3 4 5

B101. I use all means that I can to make clear words that I am not very sure of. I do not like having doubts.

1 2 3 4 5

Could you mention any other strategy or technique that you use when trying to learn English vocabulary?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR COOPERATION. IF THERE IS ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE TO MENTION, PLEASE DO SO BELOW.

Last question: Would you mind being interviewed? Please, write here your name and telephone number.

Appendices

II. ASPECTOS LINGÜÍSTICOS

- A18. As ideas culturais dun pobo, o xeito que ten de ver a realidade, vense inevitablemente reflectidas no vocabulario da súa lingua propia. 1 2 3 4 5
- A19. Aprender unha lingua estranxeira consiste esencialmente en aprender o seu vocabulario. 1 2 3 4 5
- A20. No proceso de aprendizaxe dunha lingua estranxeira, aprender vocabulario é menos importante que outros aspectos como por exemplo, a gramática. 1 2 3 4 5
- A21. Creo que o vocabulario do inglés é difícil de aprender. 1 2 3 4 5

III. APRENDIZAXE DO VOCABULARIO DUNHA LINGUA ESTRANXEIRA

- A22. A auto-aprendizaxe é a mellor maneira de aprender o vocabulario dunha lingua estranxeira. 1 2 3 4 5
- A23. O vocabulario dunha lingua estranxeira apréndese basicamente a través da lectura. 1 2 3 4 5
- A24. O significado dunha palabra só pode obterse dentro dun contexto concreto, polo tanto o novo vocabulario só pode aprenderse/ensinarse dentro dun contexto. 1 2 3 4 5
- A25. Podes chegar a aprender palabras novas dunha lingua estranxeira simplemente ao atopalas varias veces en contextos diferentes. 1 2 3 4 5
- A26. Unha das mellores maneiras de aprender vocabulario é tentar adiviñar o significado de palabras dentro dun contexto. 1 2 3 4 5
- A27. Aprender unha grande cantidade de vocabulario só se pode lograr a través da memorización de palabras. 1 2 3 4 5
- A28. Á hora de aprender/ensinar vocabulario, deberíamos prestar atención aos conxuntos de frases e palabras que acostuman a aparecer co termo concreto que estamos tentando aprender/ensinar. 1 2 3 4 5
- A29. Máis que estudándoo, o vocabulario dunha lingua estranxeira apréndese ao usalo (escoitando, falando, lendo e escribindo). 1 2 3 4 5

IV. ENSINO DO VOCABULARIO DUNHA LINGUA ESTRANXEIRA

- A30. O mínimo que un estudante debería chegar a coñecer dunha palabra é a súa forma, o seu significado e o seu uso básico, non só a palabra equivalente na súa lingua. 1 2 3 4 5
- A31. O vocabulario dunha lingua estranxeira debe ensinársese dun xeito explícito e sistemático. 1 2 3 4 5
- A32. As palabras que van ser ensinadas deben presentarse aos alumnos agrupadas (en nomes, verbos..., en grupos temáticos, en familias de palabras, etc.), e non de unha en unha. 1 2 3 4 5
- A33. É importante prestar atención á estrutura formal das palabras para poder aprendelas e ensinalas mellor. 1 2 3 4 5
- A34. Se se vai ensinar vocabulario fóra dun contexto concreto, sempre debe completarse co ensino de palabras dentro de contexto. 1 2 3 4 5
- A35. É boa idea que o profesor seleccione as palabras que quere ensinar e faga unha lista con elas para que os alumnos as aprendan. 1 2 3 4 5
- A36. No ensino do vocabulario dunha lingua estranxeira, o papel do profesor consiste principalmente en explicar aos seus alumnos o significado das palabras no contexto onde aparezan. 1 2 3 4 5
- A37. No ensino do vocabulario dunha lingua estranxeira, o papel do profesor consiste principalmente en fomentar a autonomía dos seus alumnos proporcionándolles técnicas que lles permitan aprender e empregar logo correctamente o vocabulario adquirido. 1 2 3 4 5

V. A AVALIACIÓN

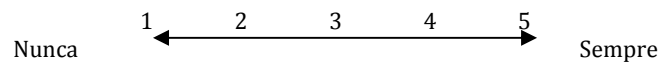
- A38. Paréceme ben empregar test específicos para avaliar o coñecemento e o correcto emprego do vocabulario en inglés. 1 2 3 4 5
- A39. Os tests para avaliar o vocabulario en inglés deben basearse en listas das palabras que se empreguen con maior frecuencia. 1 2 3 4 5
- A40. No deseño dos tests de avaliación do vocabulario, é máis importante a utilidade das palabras que a frecuencia de aparición desas palabras. 1 2 3 4 5

B. Estratexias de aprendizaxe de vocabulario

No 1990, Rebecca Oxford definiu as estratexias de aprendizaxe coma “operacións empregadas polo aprendiz que lle axuden na adquisición, almacenamento, recuperación e uso da información” (Oxford, 1990: 8). O proceso da aprendizaxe do vocabulario implica entón 4 pasos básicos:

1. Comprensión /descubrimento do significado do vocabulario
2. Almacenamento do vocabulario
3. Recuperación do vocabulario
4. Emprego do vocabulario

Neste senso, gustaríanos que completases este cuestionario sobre aquelas estratexias de aprendizaxe do vocabulario que realmente cres que os teus alumnos empregan cando tentan aprender o vocabulario do inglés. Usa a escala seguinte para responder: Se sempre empregas a estratexia que che describimos, rodea o nº 5; se polo contrario non a empregas nunca, marca o nº 1.



B41. Os meus alumnos fan uso de estratexias de aprendizaxe de vocabulario para poder comprender ou descubrir o significado daquelas palabras que lle son descoñecidas. 1 2 3 4 5

B42. Os meus alumnos fan uso de estratexias de aprendizaxe de vocabulario para poder almacenar na memoria as palabras que están tentando aprender. 1 2 3 4 5

B43. Os meus alumnos fan uso de estratexias de aprendizaxe de vocabulario para poder recuperar da memoria cando lles sexa necesario as palabras que xa aprenderon. 1 2 3 4 5

B44. Os meus alumnos fan uso de estratexias de aprendizaxe de vocabulario para poder empregar cando lles sexa necesario as palabras que xa aprenderon. 1 2 3 4 5

B45. Os meus alumnos fan uso de estratexias de aprendizaxe de vocabulario para poder regular o seu propio proceso de aprendizaxe de vocabulario. 1 2 3 4 5

Poderías mencionar outras estratexias ou técnicas que os teus alumnos poidan empregar cando tentan aprender vocabulario en inglés?

MOITAS GRAZAS POLA TÚA COOPERACIÓN. SE QUERES MENCIONAR ALGO MÁIS, PODES FACELO AQUÍ.

Unha última cuestión: Estarías disposto/a a manter unha breve entrevista comigo? De ser así, por favor, escribe aquí o teu nome e un teléfono de contacto.

APPENDIX 10: Student Interview Guide (Galician version)



Este cuestionario forma parte dun proxecto de investigación que ten como obxectivo analizar tanto as ideas sobre a aprendizaxe do vocabulario do inglés como lingua estranxeira, coma as estratexias de aprendizaxe de vocabulario de estudantes, é dicir, como aprendemos o vocabulario do inglés os que estamos a estudar esta lingua. Lembrámosche que a túa participación é voluntaria e non contará de ningún xeito para a avaliación final nesta materia. Todas as túas respostas serán tratadas dun xeito totalmente confidencial e serán empregadas só para levar a cabo esta investigación, ninguén máis terá acceso a elas, así que podes dicir o que estimes conveniente en relación co tema proposto.

I. Introducción:

¿Podería facerche unhas preguntas para a nosa base de datos?

NOME:

SEXO:

IDADE:

CURSO:

ANOS QUE ESTUDOU INGLÉS:

CENTRO DE ESTUDO:

II. Ideas sobre a aprendizaxe do vocabulario:

Agora, interésame saber a túa opinión en relación coa aprendizaxe e o ensino dunha lingua estranxeira, neste caso o inglés.

- ✓ Cando estás a estudar inglés, fáiseche ameno estudar vocabulario ou polo contrario resúltache unha tarefa nada ou pouco motivadora?
- ✓ Cal é o motivo principal que che fai estudar novo vocabulario en inglés?
- ✓ Consideras que o vocabulario do inglés é difícil de aprender? Por que?
- ✓ Cres que ao final serás capaz de aprender os termos suficientes para poder expresarte con fluidez?
- ✓ Cres que tes algunha habilidade especial para aprendelo?
- ✓ Cres que é importante dedicar tempo na clase ao vocabulario, ou cres que é mellor estudar máis outros aspectos como, por exemplo, a gramática?
- ✓ En que cres que consiste principalmente a aprendizaxe do vocabulario? Cales son as técnicas que mellor funcionan para aprendelo?
- ✓ Cres que o teu profesor/a ensina vocabulario dun xeito adecuado? Como o fai?
- ✓ Como cres que debería facelo?
- ✓ En que consiste fundamentalmente o papel do profesor/a no ensino do vocabulario?

- ✓ Estás familiarizado/a coas chamadas “estratexias de aprendizaxe”, neste caso de vocabulario? Consideras que son efectivas para a aprendizaxe?
- ✓ Cres que os profesores deberían ensinárvolas ou cres que é mellor centrarse nos contidos de cada curso?
- ✓ Por favor, describe oralmente que fas cando tentas descubrir o significado de palabras que non coñeces, [como por exemplo, facer uso do dicionario: suxerir só en caso de ser estritamente necesario].
- ✓ Por favor, describe oralmente que fas cando tentas memorizar palabras novas, [como por exemplo, repetilas en voz alta: suxerir só en caso de ser estritamente necesario].
- ✓ Por favor, describe oralmente que fas cando tentas recuperar da memoria palabras que acabas de aprender, [como por exemplo, recordar palabras agrupadas significativamente dentro da túa mente: suxerir só en caso de ser estritamente necesario].
- ✓ Por favor, describe oralmente que fas cando tentas empregar as palabras que acabas de aprender, [como por exemplo, falar todo o que podes con nativos desa lingua: suxerir só en caso de ser estritamente necesario].
- ✓ Planificas con anterioridade as palabras nas que te vas centrar e como vas aprendelas?
- ✓ Céntraste só naquelas palabras que che manda o profesor/a ou que sabes que van entrar no exame, ou estudas novo vocabulario pola túa conta, para poder entender unha película ou un videoxogo que che interese?
- ✓ Queres dicir algo máis relacionado con este tema?

Moitas grazas pola túa colaboración. A túa contribución é realmente importante para o noso proxecto de investigación.

APPENDIX 11: Student Interview Guide (English version)



The present interview is part of a research project aimed at investigating both the assumptions about learning the vocabulary of English as a foreign language and the vocabulary learning strategies of Galician students and teachers. We would be very grateful if you could answer the questions below.

I. Introduction:

May I ask you some personal questions for our file?

NAME:
GENDER:
AGE:
GRADE LEVEL:
YEARS LEARNING ENGLISH:
TEACHING INSTITUTION:

II. Vocabulary Teaching:

Now, I am interested in knowing your ideas on EFL vocabulary teaching and learning.

- ✓ Do you like studying English vocabulary?
- ✓ Why do you study English vocabulary?
- ✓ Do you think that English vocabulary is difficult to learn?
- ✓ Once you finish your training, will you have acquired a vocabulary level that allows you to express yourself fluently?
- ✓ Do you think you have a special ability to learn vocabulary?
- ✓ Do you think it is worth spending class time on the teaching of vocabulary or do you prefer other aspects, such as grammar?
- ✓ What do you think vocabulary learning consists in? What are the best techniques to learn it?
- ✓ Do you think you are being taught vocabulary in a good and effective way? Can you describe it?
- ✓ How should vocabulary be taught?
- ✓ In your opinion, what is the role of the teacher?
- ✓ Are you familiar with the concept of “learning strategies”? Do you think they work?
- ✓ Do you think learning strategies should be taught during English lessons or not?
- ✓ Please, describe what would you do to find out the meaning of new words?

Appendices

- ✓ Please, describe what would you do to memorise new vocabulary?
- ✓ Please, describe what would you do to retrieve vocabulary items from memory when needed?
- ✓ Please, describe what would you do to use the vocabulary you are learning?
- ✓ Do you regulate or plan your own vocabulary learning process?
- ✓ Do you restrict yourself to the vocabulary you are taught or do you have additional sources of information?
- ✓ Is there anything else you want to add?

Thanks for your collaboration. Your contribution is important to us.

APPENDIX 12: Teacher Interview Guide (Galician version)



Esta entrevista forma parte dun proxecto de investigación que ten como obxectivo analizar tanto as ideas sobre a aprendizaxe do vocabulario do inglés como lingua estranxeira, coma as estratexias de aprendizaxe de vocabulario de estudantes, é dicir, como aprendemos o vocabulario do inglés os que estamos a estudar esta lingua. Todas as túas respostas serán tratadas dun xeito totalmente confidencial e serán empregadas só para levar a cabo esta investigación.

Introdución:

¿Podería facerche unhas preguntas para a nosa base de datos?

NOME:

SEXO:

IDADE:

CURSO:

ANOS QUE LEVAS ENSINANDO INGLÉS:

CENTRO NO QUE ENSINAS:

Ideas sobre a aprendizaxe do vocabulario:

Agora, interésame saber a túa opinión en relación coa aprendizaxe e o ensino dunha lingua estranxeira, neste caso o inglés.

- ✓ Cres que aos teus alumnos lles resulta ameno estudar vocabulario ou polo contrario lles resulta unha tarefa nada ou pouco motivadora?
- ✓ Cal cres que é o motivo principal que lles impulsa a estudar novo vocabulario en inglés?
- ✓ Consideras que o vocabulario do inglés é difícil de aprender? Por que?
- ✓ Cres que ao final serán capaces de aprender unha cantidade de vocabulario suficiente para poder expresarse con certa fluidez?
- ✓ En xeral, cres que confían na súa habilidade para chegar a conseguilo?
- ✓ Cres que é importante dedicar tempo na clase ao vocabulario, ou cres que é mellor estudar máis outros aspectos, como por exemplo a gramática?
- ✓ En que cres que consiste principalmente a aprendizaxe do vocabulario? Cales son as técnicas que mellor funcionan para aprendelo?
- ✓ Cres que ensinas vocabulario dun xeito adecuado? A grandes resgos, que técnicas empregas?
- ✓ Cres que o xeito de ensinalo está en sintonía co que opinan os teus alumnos?

Appendices

- ✓ En que consiste fundamentalmente o papel do profesor/a no ensino do vocabulario?
- ✓ Estás familiarizado/a coas chamadas “estratexias de aprendizaxe”, neste caso de vocabulario? Consideras que son efectivas para a aprendizaxe?
- ✓ Cres que se deberían ensinar aos alumnos ou cres que é mellor centrarse nos contidos de cada curso?
- ✓ Por favor, describe oralmente que técnicas empregan os teus alumnos para descubrir o significado de palabras que non coñecen como, por exemplo, facer uso do dicionario.
- ✓ Por favor, describe oralmente que técnicas empregan os teus alumnos cando tentan memorizar palabras novas como, por exemplo, repetilas en voz alta.
- ✓ Por favor, describe oralmente que técnicas empregan os teus alumnos cando tentan recuperar da memoria palabras que acaban de aprender como, por exemplo recordar palabras agrupadas significativamente dentro da súa mente.
- ✓ Por favor, describe oralmente que técnicas empregan os teus alumnos cando tentan empregar as palabras que acaban de aprender como, por exemplo, falar todo o que poden con nativos desa lingua.
- ✓ Cres que os teu alumnos planifican con anterioridade as palabras nas que se van centrar e como van aprendelas?
- ✓ Cres que os teus alumnos se centran só naquelas palabras que lles mandas ou que saben que van entrar no exame, ou cres que estudan novo vocabulario pola túa conta, para poder entender unha película ou un videoxogo que lles interese?
- ✓ Queres dicir algo máis relacionado con este tema?

Moitas grazas pola túa colaboración. A túa contribución é realmente importante para o noso proxecto de investigación.

APPENDIX 13: Teacher Interview Guide (English version)



The present interview is part of a research project aimed at investigating both the assumptions about learning the vocabulary of English as a foreign language and the vocabulary learning strategies of Galician students and teachers. We would be very grateful if you could answer the questions below.

I. Introduction:

May I ask you some personal questions for our file?

NAME:

GENDER:

AGE:

GRADE LEVEL:

YEARS LEARNING ENGLISH:

TEACHING CENTRE:

II. Vocabulary Teaching:

Now, I am interested in knowing your ideas on EFL vocabulary teaching and learning.

- ✓ Do you think that your pupils like studying English vocabulary?
- ✓ In your opinion, why do they study English vocabulary?
- ✓ Do you think that English vocabulary is difficult to learn?
- ✓ Once your students finish their training, will they have acquired a vocabulary level that allows them to express themselves fluently in English?
- ✓ Do you think they are self-confident?
- ✓ Do you think it is worth spending class time on the teaching of vocabulary or do you prefer other aspects, such as grammar?
- ✓ What do you think vocabulary learning consists in? What are the best techniques to learn it?
- ✓ Do you think the way you teach vocabulary is good and effective?
- ✓ Do you think that the way you teach vocabulary meets your pupils' expectations?
- ✓ In your opinion, what is the role of the teacher?
- ✓ What is your opinion about the so-called "learning strategies"? Do you think they work?
- ✓ Do you think learning strategies should be taught during English lessons or not?
- ✓ In your opinion, what do your students do to find out the meaning of new words?

Appendices

- ✓ In your opinion, what do your students do to memorise new vocabulary?
- ✓ In your opinion, what do your students do to retrieve vocabulary items from memory when needed?
- ✓ In your opinion, what do your students do to use the vocabulary they are learning?
- ✓ Do you think your students regulate or plan their own vocabulary learning?
- ✓ Do you think your students restrict themselves to the vocabulary you teach them or do they have additional sources of information?
- ✓ Is there anything else you want to add?

Thanks for your collaboration. Your contribution is important to us.

**Normativa académica da Universidade de
Santiago de Compostela para teses de
doutoramento redactadas nunha lingua distinta
das oficiais**

**O ENSINO E A APRENDIZAXE DO VOCABULARIO
EN INGLÉS COMO LINGUA ESTRANXEIRA NO
CONTEXTO GALEGO. O PAPEL E A IMPORTANCIA
DAS ESTRATEXIAS DE APRENDIZAXE DE
VOCABULARIO**

**O ENSINO E A APRENDIZAXE DO VOCABULARIO EN INGLÉS COMO LINGUA
ESTRANXEIRA NO CONTEXTO GALEGO. O PAPEL E A IMPORTANCIA DAS
ESTRATEGIAS DE APRENDIZAXE DE VOCABULARIO**

Unha das tarefas máis complicadas ás que o aprendiz de inglés como lingua estranxeira debe enfrontarse é a de tentar dominar unha cantidade de vocabulario tal que lle permita comunicarse na lingua meta dun xeito preciso e fluído.

Nas últimas décadas, a implantación do enfoque comunicativo nos centros educativos levou aos lingüistas a investigar non só a mellora das técnicas de ensino, senón tamén a valorar o papel desenvolvido polos propios aprendices no proceso de aprendizaxe.

O presente estudo pretendeu investigar o ensino e aprendizaxe do vocabulario dunha lingua estranxeira, neste caso o inglés, en Galicia. Con gallo de poder levalo a cabo, procedeuse á súa estruturación en dous bloques principais. A primeira parte ofrece unha revisión da bibliografía que foi tomada en consideración á hora de establecer as bases deste estudo.

En primeiro lugar, achega un marco teórico do que se entende por 'vocabulario' así como o modo de aprendelo e ensinalo dende a óptica do enfoque comunicativo. Despois pasa a centrarse no propio aprendiz e repasa as principais teorías que versan sobre como as ideas preconcebidas sobre a aprendizaxe de linguas teñen a súa réplica no modo de aprendela e ensinala.

Un dos piares fundamentais neste campo é o concepto de 'factores persoais' preconizado por Ellis (1994), entendidos como características que condicionan en

grande medida o éxito ou o fracaso da propia aprendizaxe. Entre os devanditos factores teñen grande relevancia a aptitude cognitiva, a motivación, o nivel de ansiedade, os estilos de aprendizaxe, as ideas preconcebidas sobre a aprendizaxe e as propias estratexias de aprendizaxe. De feito, Horwitz (1988), pioneira no estudo das crenzas sobre a aprendizaxe de linguas, foi quen de determinar que estas ideas condicionan o emprego de determinadas estratexias de aprendizaxe.

En terceiro lugar, abórdase a noción de 'estratexia de aprendizaxe', a súa clasificación e os factores que condicionan o seu uso. É aquí onde os estudos realizados por Rubin (1975) e Oxford (1990) cobran a súa maior relevancia ao serviren de base teórica desta investigación. Dentro deste marco xeral, tratouse de dar conta do propio concepto de estratexia de aprendizaxe de vocabulario así como das diversas taxonomías propostas polos distintos investigadores a nivel internacional que se centraron nesta área do coñecemento tales como Gu and Johnson (1996), Schmitt (2000) ou Fan (2003). Estes poñen de relevo a importancia das características individuais do discente ao se centraren na mellora da competencia estratéxica. Este tipo de estratexias de aprendizaxe son recursos frecuentemente empregados e cada vez máis recoñecidos como un elemento imprescindible na correlación entre os factores persoais e os resultados obtidos no proceso de aprendizaxe.

Resumíronse, ademais, os estudos de investigación previos levados a cabo sobre as estratexias de vocabulario, poñendo énfase naqueles factores que demostraron ser relevantes no uso de determinadas estratexias. Así mesmo,

relatáronse as principais vantaxes de instruír aos aprendices no uso deste tipo de técnicas e tamén como levalo a cabo.

É por iso que nos decidimos a achegar a nosa pequena contribución á investigación das estratexias de vocabulario xa realizada centrándonos no contexto galego.

Xa na segunda parte deste traballo, o capítulo 3 especifica a metodoloxía empregada para desenvolvelo. Nel tivéronse en conta os dous elementos principais do proceso: por un lado, tentouse determinar se o alumnado recorre ás devanditas técnicas e, de ser o caso, cales son as máis empregadas e as menos populares. Por outra banda, recolléronse datos dos docentes encargados de ensinar esta lingua estranxeira. A intención última era a de investigar se hai unha desconexión entre alumnado e profesorado que poida explicar o baixo rendemento académico amosado.

Alén diso, tomáronse en consideración distintas variables que puidesen influír na escolla e emprego de estratexias particulares, tales coma idade, xénero, competencia léxica amosada, anos de experiencia no proceso de ensino/aprendizaxe e, por último, as ideas preconcebidas sobre a aprendizaxe do vocabulario.

Os suxeitos que participaron no estudo amosaban características individuais moi diversas co gallo de poder levar a cabo unha análise pormenorizada das variables antes mencionadas. Así, contouse con 712 estudantes de inglés como lingua estranxeira cunha idade mínima de doce anos pertencentes a institutos de educación secundaria (ESO e Bacharelato), Escolas Oficiais de Idiomas, Centros de

Linguas Modernas e universidades (Facultades de Filoloxía e de Tradución e Interpretación) das catro provincias galegas. A grandes resgos, este alumnado foi á súa vez subdividido en catro grupos de nivel de coñecemento de vocabulario en función dos resultados obtidos no test ao que foron sometidos: nivel baixo (-1000 palabras), nivel intermedio-baixo (1000 palabras), nivel intermedio-alto (2000 palabras) e nivel avanzado (3000 ou 5000 palabras).

Por outra banda, o número de docentes que participaron voluntariamente no estudo foi de 108, pertencentes aos mesmos niveis educativos que os descritos para o alumnado.

Para poder recoller a información necesaria, deseñáronse tres instrumentos de investigación distintos: o test de vocabulario, os cuestionarios e as entrevistas. O test de vocabulario fora desenvolvido por Nation (1990) e, tras pequenas adaptacións ás necesidades desta investigación, serviu como unidade de medida á hora de clasificar aos alumnos en canto a competencia léxica.

O segundo instrumento empregado foi o cuestionario. Deseñáronse dúas versións distintas do cuestionario, unha para o alumnado e outra para o profesorado, seguindo as directrices xerais marcadas por investigacións previas, tales como o BALLI (*Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory*) de Horwitz (1987), o SILL (*Strategy Inventory for Language Learning*) de Oxford (1990), o VLQ (*Vocabulary Learning Strategies Questionnaire*) de Gu e Johnson (1996), o MQ (*Motivation Questionnaire*) Schmidt e Watanabe (2001) e o VLS (*Vocabulary Learning Strategies Taxonomy*) de Schmitt (1997).

Ambas as dúas versións estaban divididas en tres seccións principais: datos persoais, crenzas sobre a aprendizaxe de vocabulario e, por último, as estratexias de aprendizaxe de vocabulario. As dúas primeiras son exactamente iguais tanto na enquisa do alumnado como na do profesorado ao fin de comparar as crenzas sobre o vocabulario de alumnado así coma dos seus docentes. Nelas preténdese, por un lado, recompilar os datos persoais que nos permitisen establecer os parámetros do estudo, isto é, sexo, idade, curso, anos de aprendizaxe/docencia de inglés e centro educativo. Por outra banda, na segunda parte pedíáselles aos participantes que expresasen o seu acordo ou desacordo con afirmacións que representaban varias ideas sobre o vocabulario relacionadas con aspectos lingüísticos, ensino, aprendizaxe e avaliación do vocabulario empregando unha escala *Likert* de 5 puntos que ía dende ‘en absoluto’(1) ata ‘totalmente de acordo’ (5).

Porén, a terceira sección, dedicada a estratexias de aprendizaxe de vocabulario concretas, variaba notablemente entre as mencionadas versións do cuestionario. Pedíáselle aos discentes que valorasen cada unha das estratexias en función do uso que facían das mesmas empregando de novo unha escala *Likert* de 5 puntos que ía dende ‘Case nunca’ (1) ata ‘Case sempre’ (5). No caso dos docentes, esta última parte só contiña cinco preguntas coas que se pretendía que describisen as estratexias que eles percibían no alumnado para levar a cabo a comprensión, almacenamento na memoria, recuperación da memoria, emprego do vocabulario cando é necesario, e regulación metacognitiva.

O terceiro instrumento de investigación é a entrevista. Ésta contaba cun formato semi-estruturado baseado nunha serie de preguntas determinadas a priori pero, ao mesmo tempo, permitindo unha marxe de liberdade á hora de contestalas. Tal e como foi o caso dos cuestionarios, ambas as dúas versións (para docentes e discentes) eran practicamente idénticas. Estaban divididas en tres seccións: información persoal, preguntas formuladas para profundar na concepción da aprendizaxe do vocabulario e, por último, pedíaslle ao alumnado que verbalizase as estratexias de vocabulario empregadas á hora de acometer tarefas de aprendizaxe concretas.

Unha vez deseñados os instrumentos que serían necesarios para recoller datos, antollouse necesario probar a súa eficacia. Para isto, levouse a cabo a súa pilotaxe en dúas institucións educativas de Santiago de Compostela en dúas fases: primeiro recolléronse datos nun instituto de educación secundaria, tanto de alumnado como de profesorado, e posteriormente procedeuse a facer o mesmo na facultade de filoloxía da Universidade de Santiago de Compostela.

O estudo piloto demostrou a idoneidade dos instrumentos de investigación e, sen embargo, varios axustes tiveron que ser incorporados na redacción de determinados ítems para evitar posible ambigüidades ou unha mala interpretación dos mesmos, especialmente no caso dos aprendices máis novos.

Posteriormente e tras reformar os instrumentos mencionados, chegou o momento de acometer o estudo principal. En termos xerais, seguiuuse o mesmo procedemento que no estudo piloto, é dicir, establecendo dúas fases principais. En primeiro lugar, recolleuse información nos centros de ensino secundario e máis

tarde fíxose o mesmo nas institucións universitarias e nas escolas oficiais de idiomas.

Toda a información recollida foi codificada, procesada e analizada empregando o test estatístico ANOVA (Análise da Varianza). Así mesmo, os datos recompilados por medio das entrevistas foron analizados seguindo as directrices de Wenden (1987) a través do procedemento da análise do contido. Así, foi posible levar a cabo unha comparación entre o alumnado e o profesorado, e determinar as variables cunha maior influencia na escolla e uso das estratexias de aprendizaxe de vocabulario.

O capítulo 4 presentou, por un lado, os datos cuantitativos estatisticamente analizados e recollidos a través dos cuestionarios e do test de vocabulario e, por outro, dos datos cualitativos obtidos a través das entrevistas empregando o procedemento da análise do contido.

O capítulo 5 profundou na análise destes datos nun intento de dar resposta aos obxectivos desta investigación formulados previamente, tales como a identificación das ideas sobre o vocabulario e as estratexias de vocabulario empregadas.

Pódese dicir que os estudantes achegaron unhas crenzas sobre o vocabulario moi específicas. Aposaron un niveis de motivación cara a aprendizaxe léxica xeralmente altos ao igual que o grao de optimismo de cara á consecución das metas establecidas. Asemade, consideraron os elementos culturais da lingua en cuestión como especialmente relevantes na súa adquisición. En canto ás técnicas de ensino do vocabulario, salientaron a importancia da aprendizaxe dentro dun

contexto e, sobre todo, o emprego e a práctica das palabras novas para a súa correcta asimilación. Por último, puxeron énfase na importancia de contar cun xeito claro e sistemático de ensinar o vocabulario, prestando atención á estrutura morfolóxica das palabras e á creación de asociacións entre as mesmas coa combinación de ensino descontextualizado e tamén dentro de contextos específicos.

Porén, as crenzas manifestadas polos discentes non coincidiron ao cen por cen coas do profesorado. Estes últimos amosaron non ser conscientes das ideas do alumnado e incluso se queixaron da súa baixa motivación. De feito, moitos consideraron que os seus alumnos só estudaban vocabulario para aprobar os exames e carecían de calquera clase de motivación instrumental ou integrativa, nin tampouco pensaban que fixeran grandes esforzos por aprender. Ademais, como era de esperar, os docentes amosaron ideas máis claras que os seus alumnos de cara ao vocabulario e tamén favoreceron o ensino contextualizado de elementos léxicos, mentres que criticaron a memorización de palabras. Foi curioso comprobar como os discentes mencionaron un número maior de técnicas de ensino de vocabulario que os propios profesores.

A inmensa maioría dos participantes valorou moi positivamente o uso das estratexias de aprendizaxe de vocabulario así como a súa instrución na clase. Sen embargo, isto contrasta en grande medida coa pouca frecuencia de uso amosada das devanditas estratexias.

En canto á análise de estratexias concretas, as máis utilizadas foron as metacognitivas e aquelas empregadas para descubrir o significado das palabras.

Polo contrario, estratexias de recuperación de palabras da memoria, as de uso do vocabulario e as da almacenaxe na memoria son moito menos populares. Foi tamén unha contradición o feito de que, se ben a inmensa maioría dos docentes se amosaron a favor de promover e incluso ensinar as estratexias de aprendizaxe de vocabulario, a inmensa maioría deles admitiu non prestarlles demasiada atención por falta de tempo durante o curso.

En canto aos factores individuais estudados, pódese dicir que as mulleres revelaron un maior grao de motivación que os homes de cara á adquisición léxica e unha maior determinación á hora de ler e empregar as palabras que van aprendendo, mentres que os homes pareceron decantarse máis pola memorización de palabras concretas. Outra variable relevante foi a idade dos participantes: aqueles estudantes maiores de 20 anos manifestaron unha maior motivación cara á aprendizaxe e uso do vocabulario para comunicarse en inglés. Por outra banda, os máis novos (12-14) admitiron un maior esforzo por aprender, facendo uso de medios mecánicos e a memorización de listas de palabras; sen embargo, a maior idade, maior uso da lectura e aprendizaxe contextualizado. Nesta mesma liña, a obrigatoriedade ou non dos estudos cursados é a condición que diferencia un grao de motivación elevado ou non. Isto é, os estudantes que cursan inglés dun xeito obrigatorio (ESO e Bacharelato) estaban moito menos motivados que aqueles que o facían dun xeito voluntario (EOI, UNI, OTH). Ademais, o alumnado de ESO foi a nota discordante ao confiar en maior medida na memorización de palabras, mentres que os restantes grupos preferían un ensino contextualizado do léxico. Finalmente, os estudantes con diversos niveis

de competencia léxica tamén diferiron nas súas crenzas sobre o vocabulario. Tendo en conta o baixos resultados obtidos no test de vocabulario (coñecemento medio de 1000 palabras), as mulleres obtiveron mellores resultados que os homes (1000 e -1000, respectivamente); os alumnos maiores teñen un maior coñecemento léxico que os menores, sendo os 21 a idade clave (-1000 e 1000, respectivamente); o alumnado cursando estudos non obrigatorios obtivo mellores resultados que aqueles que o fan dun xeito obrigatorio (ESO e Bacharelato: -1000, EOI e OTH: 1000, UNI: 2000).

Os devanditos factores persoais (competencia léxica, xénero, idade, curso e anos de estudo de inglés) tamén tiveron influencia no uso das estratexias de aprendizaxe de vocabulario. Primeiro, os mellores alumnos foron os que empregaron un maior número de estratexias máis frecuentemente, especialmente estratexias de adiviñación do significado, análise formal da palabra ou emprego do dicionario, mentres que os estudantes con peores resultados preferían a tradución ou preguntarlle ao profesor directamente. Ocorre o mesmo no caso de estratexias metacognitivas: a maior coñecemento léxico, maior emprego deste tipo de estratexias. Segundo, as mulleres recorreron máis frecuentemente ás estratexias que os homes, especialmente a aquelas usadas para descubrir o significado das palabras e as metacognitivas. Terceiro, os alumnos de máis idade foron os que máis estratexias empregaron, sobre todo as de adiviñación de significado e o uso do dicionario mentres que os máis novos se limitaban a traducir ou a recorrer ás estratexias sociais, tales como preguntarlle ao profesor ou a un compañeiro o significado das palabras que non sabían. Así

mesmo, as estratexias de almacenaxe na memoria usadas polos maiores requirían dun procesamento mental máis profundo mentres que os máis novos preferían estratexias máis superficiais tales como a repetición oral ou escrita. De feito, a mesma reflexión pode aplicarse ao factor curso, dado que o alumnado universitario e de escolas de idiomas empregou estratexias moito máis frecuentemente que aqueles cursando educación secundaria. Cuarto, os aprendices con máis de dez anos de experiencia na aprendizaxe de inglés son os que máis usaron as estratexias en todas e cada unha das categorías, agás na de almacenaxe na memoria, onde foron superados polos de menor experiencia (0-5 anos).

Ao examinar a influencia das diferenzas individuais do profesorado sobre as crenzas manifestadas con respecto á aprendizaxe léxica, viuse que as súas respostas foron máis ben homoxéneas de acordo ás distintas variables (xénero, idade, curso e experiencia docente). De feito, só se atoparon pequenas diverxencias en elementos concretos que non tiveron maior transcendencia.

Estes achados levaron a que no capítulo 6 se resumiran as posibles implicacións pedagóxicas formuladas de acordo cos mesmos, así como as limitacións do presente estudo e suxestións para futuras investigacións. Centrouse principalmente en investigar as crenzas sobre vocabulario e o uso de estratexias tanto de profesores como alumnos para poder ter unha visión do estado actual do ensino e aprendizaxe dunha lingua estranxeira en Galicia. Os devanditos resultados leváronnos a establecer as seguintes implicacións:

a. A implantación do enfoque comunicativo debe levar aos docentes a contar non só coas súas propias ideas sobre a aprendizaxe, senón tamén cas dos seus alumnos. De feito, viuse claramente como estes últimos foron capaces de identificar prácticas docentes como apropiadas ou inadecuadas. Parece obvio, entón, que os docentes deberían coñecer estas crenzas para evitar tensións innecesarias nas clases.

b. En termos xerais, o alumnado amosou altos índices de motivación, maiores do esperado polos seus profesores, especialmente entre aqueles que estudan inglés dun xeito voluntario. É curioso observar como o alumnado novo se amosa desexoso de aprender e como vai perdendo ese interese a medida que se vai facendo maior. É aquí onde os profesores deben tentar manter eses graos de motivación facéndolles ver aos alumnos o valor de aprender léxico para o seu futuro, así como adaptar os materiais ás necesidades do alumnado na medida do posible (Yang, 1999; Shen, 2006).

c. Este estudo demostrou que os discentes esperan un ensino do vocabulario claro e sistemático polo tanto, tal e como afirmou Nation (2001), a adquisición do vocabulario é un proceso longo e continuo, e non pode restrinxirse só a un ensino implícito no cal os docentes presentan vocabulario e os alumnos teñen que asimilalo. É por iso que o papel do profesor non consiste só en presentar vocabulario, materias, *input* e actividades que favorezan o desenvolvemento léxico senón tamén en axudarlles a organizar o seu léxico mental, establecendo conexións entre palabras co seu uso e revisándoas cada certo tempo.

d. Neste senso, parece razoable promover o uso de estratexias de aprendizaxe de vocabulario, dado que a inmensa maioría dos estudantes declararon non estar familiarizados con este tipo técnicas de aprendizaxe e amosáronse dispostos a recibir instrución no uso das estratexias. Por outra banda, os docentes manifestaron ser conscientes do valor deste tipo de técnicas e, sen embargo, non as ensinan na clase. Isto provoca unha situación contraditoria: non se ensina aos discentes o emprego destas estratexias porque non se está deixando espazos para isto nos currículos académicos nin na propia formación dos docentes. Isto debería ter sido en conta para futuras melloras dos programas de formación do profesorado de linguas estranxeiras.

e. Cando se lle pide ao alumnado que reflexione sobre o propio proceso de aprendizaxe léxico, todos recorren, en maior ou menor medida, a estratexias de aprendizaxe de vocabulario concretas. Fomentar este tipo de reflexións facilita que o alumno tome conciencia da posibilidade de usar estratexias que se adecúen á súa propia idiosincrasia como aprendiz. De feito, estudos previos (Horwitz, 1987; Wenden, 1987; Yang, 1999; Jiménez-Catalán, 2003; Hong, 2006; Shen, 2006) así como este mesmo demostraron que as crenzas previas determinan a escolla e o uso de estratexias concretas. Os docentes poden ofrecer unha ampla gama delas aos estudantes para axudarlles a ir progresivamente incorporando estas técnicas ao seu repertorio. Tal e como expuxeron Gu and Johnson (1996), a adquisición do vocabulario é unha tarefa con moitas facetas que require de moitas estratexias ao longo das diferentes fases de aprendizaxe.

f. Todas as implicacións anteriores parecen suxerir que as programacións didácticas deberían incluír a instrución no emprego de estratexias nas clases de lingua estranxeira dende idades moi temperás. Debería desenvolverse un programa de instrución na cal se lles puidese deixar claro aos discentes a razón pola que se lles introduce a este tipo de estratexias. Unha vez asumido que estas poden mellorar a súa competencia léxica, os profesores poden ir incorporando diferentes técnicas a cada un dos procesos de aprendizaxe tendo en conta o desenvolvemento cognitivo do alumnado.

En futuras investigacións, sería interesante levar a cabo un estudo experimental sobre a instrución en estratexias para determinar a súa efectividade en contextos específicos de ensino do inglés. Para poder levalo a cabo, cumpriría contar cun número maior de docentes previamente adestrados no ensino das mesmas que, posteriormente, fosen capaces de instruír aos seus propios alumnos. Estudos deste tipo poden contribuír en grande medida á mellora do ensino e aprendizaxe do inglés como lingua estranxeira no contexto galego. Esa foi a miña intención dende o principio.