

Vocabulary Acquisition and Expansion for the EFL Learner

Maggie Lieb

Himeji Dokkyo University

Abstract

The basic foundation of language learning is vocabulary acquisition. Individual words and phrases are the building blocks of communication. Grammar, sentences, and syntax come later and, while important for effective communication, serve primarily to add structure to a solid base of vocabulary. Therefore, it is necessary to give serious consideration to strategies for successful learning of vocabulary. In this presentation, recommendations from the experts in second language vocabulary acquisition were discussed, including implicit versus explicit approaches and the role of L1. Practical suggestions were then offered for developing and expanding vocabulary in the EFL classroom, including memorization techniques, metacognitive strategies, and deep processing. Resources were also provided on second language vocabulary acquisition, for participants to use in the formulation of their own teaching approaches.

Introduction

“Vocabulary acquisition is a crucial, and in some senses, the central component in successful foreign language acquisition”, (Beglar & Hunt, 2005, p. 7)

It could be argued that vocabulary is the cornerstone of successful second language acquisition. Everyone has an innate desire to name their experiences, their environment, their reality. In some ways, vocabulary could be considered the “meat” of a language, and grammar the framework that holds it together. While it is possible to communicate without good grammar, it is virtually impossible without vocabulary. For students, instruction in second language vocabulary can be highly motivational with rapid, attainable results which lead to increased self confidence. In spite of all this, however, relatively little research has been done into second language vocabulary acquisition (SLVA) until recently (Folse, 2004).

Theoretical Background

What does it mean to 'know' a word?

Knowing' a word implies more than merely learning its definition. It must be studied in terms of its form, its function, and its phonology. It must be understood in terms of its collocational context which requires studying semantic chunks as opposed to individual isolated words. Nagy & Herman's (1985) Vocabulary Learning Hypothesis (VLH) states that “most vocabulary is learned gradually through repeated exposure to new and known words in various contexts” (in Shaffer, 2005, p.21). The VLH further indicates that the first time learners meet a word, they have a 5-10% chance of remembering it, and that 10-12 exposures are required to commit new words to memory.

Explicit Versus Implicit Vocabulary Instruction

Many studies laud the merits of both implicit (incidental) vocabulary instruction and explicit (direct) vocabulary instruction. Nation (2005) says it's important to “balance deliberate learning with message-focused learning so that you can get the best of the two approaches” (p.12). Laufer (2005) recommends “form-focused instruction” to complement incidental acquisition, while Beglar & Hunt (2005) emphasize contextualized as well as decontextualized input. However, Krashen, (2003), in his Input Hypothesis claims that “comprehending messages is the only way language is acquired” (p.4). In the early stages of language learning, however, explicit vocabulary instruction may be more important, but as competency increases, there may be greater reliance on implicit vocabulary instruction (Ellis, 1996).

The Role of L1 in SLVA

Constructivist theory is based on the premise that effective learning links new knowledge to that which is already known. “There is a growing revolt against the belief, held by proponents of the Direct Method, that the mother tongue should be excluded from the second language classroom... the mother tongue is the launch pad for the second language” (Morgan & Rinvoluceri, 2004, p. 8). According to Nation (2003), the most effective way to begin to learn the meaning of a word is by translation into L1. However, Laufer (2005) cautions that the best use of L1 is with L2 words that have an exact or close equivalent in L1.

Some words of caution

Folse (2004) warns against incorrectly applying L1 vocabulary acquisition theory to L2 vocabulary acquisition, especially as regards vocabulary learning from context. Clark and Ishida (2005) contend that for EAP students, “merely being exposed to academic texts in their content classes is not sufficient for the development of vocabulary knowledge...explicit attention needs to be paid to vocabulary knowledge as a part of instruction” (p.11). And finally, Morgan & Rinvoluceri (2004) emphasize the importance of considering learner differences in light of learning styles, multiple intelligences, and neurolinguistic programming.

Implications for instruction

In light of the current discussion about SLVA, certain key guidelines are evident for classroom instruction. First, extensive reading and listening can be key in successful incidental vocabulary acquisition (Nation, 2005) but 98% of vocabulary must be known to infer meanings of unknown words from context (Laufer, 2005). Constant recycling of vocabulary is essential to offer the repeated exposures required to commit words to memory. Furthermore, narrow reading plays a role in decreasing the learning burden through increased repetition and accelerating the acquisition of content-specific vocabulary (Shaffer, 2005).

Student progress in terms of explicit SLVA may be monitored by West's (1953) General Service List, and Coxhead's (2000) Academic Word List.

Furthermore, a key component in effective SLVA is the teaching of metacognitive strategies to increase learner autonomy, heighten motivation, and ensure a greater probability of success. Finally, vocabulary activities which require deep rather than shallow processing of words lead to better retention (Ellis, 1996, Morgan & Rinvoluceri, 2004).

Practical Activities

Many of the activities presented were developed by Morgan & Rinvoluceri (2004). They included activities to introduce vocabulary; text based activities; writing activities for Communicative Output (Nation, 2005, Beglar & Hunt, 2005); L1/L2 activities; suggestions for using corpora and concordances; multisensory activities; word personalization tasks; as well as suggestions for dictionary and revision exercises.

Conclusion

Vocabulary acquisition plays a key role in successful second language learning. Therefore it requires careful consideration and systematic instructional approaches ground in reliable and informative research. This presentation sought to equip and inspire second language educators in their quest to implement effective and innovative approaches to teaching vocabulary. According to Berman (2002), "In order to live in the world, we must name it. Names are essential for the construction of reality for without a name, it is difficult to accept the existence of an object, an event, a feeling. Vocabulary is essential... which is why it is so important" (p.167).

Bibliography

Beglar, D., & Hunt, A. (2005). Six principles for teaching foreign language vocabulary: A commentary on Laufer, Meara, and Nation's "Ten Best Ideas", *The Language Teacher* 29 (7), 7-10

Berman, M. (2002). *A multiple intelligences road to an ELT classroom*, Carmarthen, Wales, Crown House Publishing, Ltd.

Clark, M. & Ishida, S. (2005). Vocabulary knowledge differences between placed and promoted EAP students, *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*. Retrieved Jan. 24, 2006 from www.elsevier.com/locate/jeap

Ellis, N. (1995). Vocabulary acquisition: Psychological perspectives, *The Language Teacher* 19(2), 12-16

Folse, K. (2004). *Vocabulary myths: Applying second language research to classroom teaching*, Ann Arbor, MI, University of Michigan Press.

Krashen, S. (2003). *Explorations in language acquisition and use*, Portsmouth NH, Heinemann

Laufer, B., Meara, & P., Nation, P. (2005). Ten best ideas for teaching vocabulary, *The Language Teacher* 29 (7), 3-6.

Morgan, J. & Rinvolucri, M. (2004). *Vocabulary (2nd Ed.)*, Oxford: Oxford University Press

Nagy, W., & Herman, P. (1985). Incidental vs instructional approaches to increasing reading vocabulary, *Educational Perspectives*, 23, 16-21

Nation, P. (2003). Learning vocabulary in another language: A test of teachers' knowledge. Retrieved Jan. 24, 2006 from <http://www.vuw.ac.nz/lals/staff/paul-nation/vocrefs/testa.aspx>

Shaffer, J. (2005). Choosing narrow reading texts for incidental vocabulary acquisition, *The Language Teacher* 29(7), 21-27

Useful Resources

Bauman, J. & Culligan, B. (1995). The General Service List. Retrieved Jan. 24, 2006 from <http://www.auburn.edu/~nunnath/engl6240/wlistgen.html> (Includes the 2,000 words from West's original GSL plus 284 more ranked and presented in frequency order based on Brown's Corpus)

Coxhead, A. (2000). A New Academic Word List. *TESOL Quarterly*, 34(2), 213-238

Coxhead, A. (2000). The Academic Word List. School of Linguistics & Applied Language Studies, Victoria University of Wellington. Retrieved Jan. 24, 2006 from <http://www.vuw.ac.nz/lals/research/awl/index.html>

Nation, I.S.P. (2004). Range and Frequency (Computer Software). Retrieved Jan. 24, 2006 from www.vuw.ac.nz/lals/staff/Paul_Nation

Nation, I.S.P. (2003). The Vocabulary Levels Tests. Unpublished manuscript, Temple University Japan, Osaka.

West, M. (1953). *A general service list of English words*. London, Longman.

Maggie Lieb teaches at Himeji Dokkyo University. Her B. Ed. Degree is from St. Patrick's College, Dublin (National University of Ireland) and her M.A. in reading/language arts is from California State University, Chico. Her research interests include Whole Brained Language Learning, Multiple Intelligences, the Affective Domain, and Vocabulary Acquisition.

Appendix A

Cards on the Table (Adapted from Morgan & Rinvoluceri, 2004, p. 25)

In this pre-text activity, participants were asked to categorize words in order to facilitate deep processing, and to clarify their ideas about the topic.

Look at the list of the words on the left. With your partner, put them into 2, 3, 4, or 5 groups. Then explain your reasoning to the group.

man	son	god	animal	soul	stomach
enemy	family	group	boy	baby	head
mind	friend	woman	father	heart	girl
child	daughter	adult	pet	mother	blood

Appendix B

Ghost Definitions (Adapted from Morgan & Rinvoluceri, 2004, p. 37)

(This activity was presented as an example of a text-based activity requiring students to focus on exact meanings of words and phrases. It was based on an excerpt from Hagen, S. (1999). Journeys Writing 1, Singapore, Longman Asia ELT, p. 61.)

Find words in the text that match the following definitions:

- not long ago
- finished studying
- a place to buy and eat food
- chores
- gets pleasure from
- liked more than all the others
- begin to experience warm feelings towards
- to rest and get rid of stress
- people who buy things
- the trip in a car

Appendix C

Learn by Associating (Adapted from Morgan & Rinvoluceri, 2004, pp. 58-59)

(In this activity, participants were introduced to a strategy for incorporating L1 into L2 vocabulary instruction, as well as to encourage metacognitive learning.)

Participants were asked to take a sheet of paper and make four columns, and label them as shown. The first column is for the new words being studied. The “word association” column is for a personal association with the new word. The “mother tongue” column is to translate the word into L1. And the “bridge association” is for students to write a sentence linking L1 and L2. In this case, Japanese words were used as the words under study, and English as the L1.

<i>Word</i>	<i>Word Association</i>	<i>Mother Tongue</i>	<i>Bridge Association</i>
Uchiwa	Ouch!	Fan	When it's too hot, I say “uchiwa”!
Shigoto	Female goat	Job	The female goat needs a “shigoto”.
Denwa	Then what happened..?	Phone	I talked to my friend on the phone and said “denwa happened?”

Multiple Intelligences in the EFL Classroom

Maggie Lieb

Himeji Dokkyo University

Abstract

Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences (1983) has gained widespread acclaim and acceptance, and has inspired educators all over the world. Challenging the notion of intelligence as a single, unitary concept, MI theory has revolutionized how educators view the learning process. The idea of a "one size fits all" approach to learning has been replaced by the idea of multiple intelligences, or aptitudes which can be activated to ensure successful learning. This leads to the challenge of differentiating instruction to cater to a wide variety of intelligences and abilities. Yet, little research has been done into the applicability of MI theory into the EFL classroom. This workshop explored ways to assess the multiple intelligence profile of both EFL teachers and students and highlighted strategies for implementing MI theory in the EFL classroom. The outcome of multiple intelligence instruction promises to be a more effective and rewarding learning experience for students and teachers.

Introduction

The purpose of this presentation was to provide an overview of Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences, and how it can be specifically applied to the EFL classroom. Since little research exists on the implementation of MI Theory in the EFL classroom, the goal was to de-mystify MI application and to demonstrate to participants that many of the classroom techniques they currently use cater to a variety of intelligence types. The presentation aimed to reinforce and add to practices already in use in EFL classrooms.

What is intelligence?

This presentation began by inviting participants to reflect on the nature of intelligence. After writing personal reflections on paper, they paired up and shared their thoughts with other participants. Plenary sharing of ideas followed, and it was discovered that many of their ideas overlapped with those of Howard Gardner. Gardner (1983) challenged the two traditional concepts of intelligence: 1) cognition as a single, unitary concept and 2) that each person has a single, quantifiable intelligence. Instead, Gardner proposed the Theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI Theory) that claims:

- a. We all possess multiple intelligences that we combine and use in our own unique ways.
- b. IQ tests only measure a small range of these intelligences
- c. Each intelligence type is comprised of numerous sub-intelligences
- d. Each intelligence develops at its own rate.
- e. Rather than focusing on an IQ score, we should focus instead on establishing a cognitive

profile.

Gardner went on to say that common to all intelligences is the ability to solve real life problems; to generate new problems to solve; and the ability to make a valued contribution to society (Campbell, Campbell, & Dickinson, 2004). Studies indicate that teachers' instructional approaches tend to be heavily influenced by their own strongest intelligence type, so participants were thus invited to establish their own cognitive profile, using an inventory developed by Ivanko (1998).

Why incorporate MI Theory into EFL instruction?

Kornhaber, Fierros, & Veenema (2004) conducted a study of 41 schools who had incorporated MI theory into their instructional programs and discovered improvement in their standardized test scores, discipline, parental participation, and performance of learning disabled students. They further claim that using MI Theory "helps teachers understand the range of individual student's strengths, and to find opportunities for them to become engaged through their strengths, and to work on their weaknesses" (Kornhaber et al, 2004, p. 120). Furthermore, Curie (2003) points out that focusing on students' strengths makes the learning process more accessible and Schmidt-Fajlik (2004) underscores the value of MI Theory in meeting the needs of learners at all stages of life.

Intelligence Types and Practical Approaches

Verbal-Linguistic Intelligence

Like each of the multiple intelligences, the verbal linguistic intelligences is multi-faceted. According to Campbell et al. (2004) learners who exhibit this intelligence type may excel at journalism, poetry, storytelling, or debate. They may have a keen sensitivity to learning other languages, and to sound, rhythm, and meaning of words in general. They often have a passion for self expression and tend to listen, read, speak, or write efficiently.

Activities suited to this intelligence type include storytelling activities, word building games, acrostics, and pangrams (Berman, 2002). Campbell et al, (2004) recommends guided listening activities for listening to stories, poetry, and lectures for this intelligence type.

Visual-Spatial Intelligence

Awareness of the various components of this intelligence type is crucial to adequately catering to the needs of the visual spatial learner. According to Campbell et al. (2004), a distinction should be made between learners who learn by seeing and observing (external imagery); learners who learn by imagining (internal imagery); and those who learn by drawing (imagery created). Furthermore, learners with heightened visual-spatial awareness may successfully navigate themselves and objects through space. But perhaps most interesting

is the idea that visual-spatial learners tend to be more attuned to body language, gestures, and non-verbal communication which play a key role in EFL classrooms.

Therefore, successfully catering to this intelligence necessitates incorporating activities such as maps, charts, diagrams, and visual organizers as external imagery; guided visualization and visual memory techniques as internal imagery; and opportunities to create drawings, word configurations, and personal flowcharts as imagery created. There is considerable overlap between visual-spatial and bodily-kinesthetic intelligence especially in terms of navigation of body and self through space. Reference will be made to this point in the discussion on bodily-kinesthetic intelligence.

Musical-Rhythmic Intelligence

A growing body of research is highlighting the interconnectivity of the musical and linguistic intelligences. Although they are separate, unique abilities operating out of different parts of the brain, studies indicate that they are mutually reinforcing (Zatorre et al, 1992). Campbell et al. (2004) stress that music and language are both forms of self-expression, and share 3 key components: pitch, rhythm, timbre. Learners with strong musical-rhythmic intelligence may exhibit abilities ranging from kinesthetic response to music (dance; rhythm) to singing; to competence in playing an instrument, to academically analyzing music.

There are many possibilities for catering to the musical-rhythmic intelligence in the EFL classroom. Songs can be effectively used for listening activities such as gap fills; reading comprehension activities in lieu of a text; speaking tasks based on the themes of songs; as springboards for writing activities; and to reinforce grammar points and vocabulary (Lieb, 2005).

Mathematical-Logical Intelligence

Learners who exhibit strong mathematical-logical intelligence tend to have strong deductive and inductive reasoning skills, as well as the ability to recognize and solve problems, and to discern patterns and relationships.

Having mathematical-logical learners induce grammar rules based on examples is an effective way to cater to this intelligence. Berman (2002) recommends a variety of logical/analytical activities including crosswords, sequencing activities, and finding mistakes. Campbell et al. (2004) also encourages strategies to enhance logical thinking such as diverse questioning strategies, open-ended problems, syllogisms, and analogies.

Interpersonal Intelligence

N.K. Humphrey, a British psychologist, claimed that "Social intelligence is the most important feature of the human intellect and that the greatest creative use of the human mind

is to maintain human society effectively", (Campbell et al., 2005, p. 155). Learners with highly developed interpersonal intelligence fulfill this role through their ability to understand and communicate with others; to form and maintain relationships; and to assume various roles within groups.

These learners enjoy collaborative activities. Therefore, role plays, games requiring teamwork, pairwork and group discussions are ideally suited to this intelligence type. Many of the simplest activities conducted in the EFL classroom such as checking answers in pairs and/or providing peer feedback/review cater perfectly to interpersonal learners.

Intrapersonal Intelligence

It is important to acknowledge that there is a strong link between interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences as it is through others that we come to know ourselves. This intelligence involves bringing our thoughts and feelings into consciousness and exploring ways to better understand ourselves (Campbell et al, 2004). Learners with highly developed intrapersonal intelligence tend to have strong self awareness and often wish to seek out and understand their inner experiences. They tend to be highly reflective and are often curious about life's "big" questions.

Introspective activities such as journaling, self-directed instruction, and creative writing are a good match for this intelligence type (Berman, 2002). Training in metacognitive strategies are especially relevant as are activities designed to encourage autonomous learning (Campbell et al., 2004). Pair interviews are also valuable for this intelligence type as conversations with others lead learners towards enhanced self-awareness.

Bodily-kinesthetic Intelligence

This intelligence type manifests itself in a variety of ways. In general, these learners learn by doing, although some are tactile (learn by touch and manipulation); and some are kinesthetic (learn by activating the whole body). Whatever the case, however, physical activity "aids memory by encoding learning throughout the body's neuromusculature" (Campbell et al, 2004, p. 65).

As mentioned earlier, there is considerable overlap between visual-spatial and bodily-kinesthetic intelligence especially in terms of navigation of body and self through space. With this in mind, activities ideally suited to kinesthetic learners include mingling activities (such as "Find someone who..."), gesture games such as "Charades", and dramatic activities. Use of manipulatives such as cards, game pieces, pictures, etc. caters to the tactile learner. Including both types of activating ensures that this intelligence type is adequately accommodated.

Naturalist Intelligence

Learners with highly developed naturalist intelligence are eager to interact with the environment. As such, they constantly look for patterns in the world, and have the ability to observe, classify, and categorize objects in the natural and man-made world (Campbell et al., 2004). It could be argued that there is considerable overlap between this intelligence type and mathematical-logical learners, since they also seek to discern patterns and relationships..

It follows that ordering, classifying, or categorizing activities are ideally suited to this intelligence type. Berman (2002) recommends arranging words in groups and collocations activities while Campbell et al. (2004) suggest structuring activities around time (when?); environment (where?); participation (who?); action (what?); and motive (why?).

Conclusion

Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligence holds exceptional promise for the future of education at all levels. If correctly implemented, it allows educators everywhere to reach more learners and offer success for a greater number of students. The hope is that EFL learners everywhere will also experience the benefits of MI Theory and experience greater fulfillment and success in their language learning endeavors. Campbell et al. claim that "Every human life will be enriched through developing many kinds of intelligence to the greatest extent possible" (2004, p.xxii).

Maggie Lieb teaches at Himeji Dokkyo University. Her B. Ed. Degree is from St. Patrick's College, Dublin (National University of Ireland) and her M.A. in reading/language arts is from California State University, Chico. Her research interests include whole brained language learning, multiple intelligences, the affective domain, and vocabulary acquisition.

References

Berman, M. (2002). *A multiple intelligences road to an ELT classroom*, Carmathen, Wales, Crown House Publishing, Ltd.

Campbell, L., Campbell B., Dickinson, D. (2004). *Teaching and learning through multiple intelligences*. Boston, Pearson Education, Inc.

Gardner, H. (1983). *Frames of mind: The theory of multiple intelligences*. New York, Basic Books.

Gardner, H. (1993). *Multiple intelligences: The theory in practice*. New York, Basic Books.

Ivanco, J. (1998). What are my learning strengths? Retrieved March 21st, 2006 from <http://snow.utoronto.ca/courses/mitest.html>

Kornhaber, M., Fierros, E., Veenema, S. (2004). *Multiple intelligences: Best ideas from research and practice*. Boston, Pearson Education, Inc.

Lieb, M. (2005). Popular Music and its Role in the EFL Classroom, (To appear in *The Proceedings of the 13th Annual KOTESOL International Conference*, Seoul, Korea)

Schmidt-Fajlik, R. (2004). Multiple intelligences and lifelong language learning. *The Language Teacher*, 28(8) 19-22

Zatorre, R.J., Evans, A.C., Meyer, E., and Gjedde, A. (1992). Lateralization of phonic and pitch processing in speech perception. *Science* 256. (846-849).