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***Using Contextual Clues in Guessing
Foreign Language Vocabulary Meaning***

The Case of First-Year LMD Students

*A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the
Magistere Degree in Teaching English as a Foreign Language*

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Dedication

To the memory of my mother

To my father for his understanding and support

To my wife and my children

To my brothers, sisters and friends

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I wish to express my gratitude to Dr. Ahmed Moumene, the supervisor of this research work, for his encouragement and guidance throughout my post graduate studies.

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Abstract

The present study is an attempt to prove that training learners in using the inferencing strategy for unknown words while reading is possible. We started our research work with an introduction of the topic of reading and the different reading theories together with the reading purposes to pave the ground for the discussion of vocabulary strategies. These strategies are divided into two categories: Teacher –centered strategies where the teacher is the main actor; and learner-centered strategies which focus on the learners’ independent strategies. The strategy which is at the center work is guessing vocabulary meaning from context or the guessing from context strategy. In our study, we have tried to answer two main interrelated research questions. The first is whether the guessing from context strategy training is possible or not? The second concerns the degree at which the learners’ rate of giving correct guesses can be improved after training?

To answer these questions, we adopted a pre-experimental research design where one group of students is pretested, trained in using the strategy and then post-tested. These participants are first year LMD students of English at the University of Mentouri in Constantine. The findings of this study confirm the results of previous research on training

students in using contextual clues for guessing vocabulary meaning which show that considerable gains take place on the part of learners (Ames,1966, Liu and Nationm1984); thus, a strong confirmation of the possibility of strategy training.

The findings of this research work have various pedagogical implications, particularly for students who are doing extensive readings. In this case, readers find it difficult to use the dictionary to check every word. In addition, the teacher is not always available for help, therefore, the best way left to overcome this problem is using the guessing from context strategy.

List of Abbreviations

FL:	Foreign language
GFCs:	Guessing from Context strategy
L1:	First language
LMD:	License Master Doctorate
TL :	Target language
VIS:	Visual information store

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Introduction

Dealing with vocabulary in reading a foreign language has always been one area of my interest. As a student and as a teacher, I have noticed that most students have problems in reading comprehension because of the question of lexis. In fact, the readability of a text correlates with vocabulary knowledge (Nation and Coady, 1988: 97). Words are considered as the basic unit of language since without sufficient vocabulary; students can not learn a foreign language (Fengning, 1994: 39). The way this problem could be overcome has always been an area of investigation by language teachers and researchers. Most of the specialists in the field (Clarke and Nation, 1980) have come to an agreement that one of the strategies used in dealing with the question of vocabulary is through the use of the strategy of guessing the meaning of words from contextual clues or what is called the guessing from context strategy (GFC s).

Guessing or inferring the meaning of unknown lexical items from the context in a foreign language is affected by many factors such as the ratio of known to unknown vocabulary in a particular text and students' training in the GFC strategy. Before reaching this stage of training, readers should be introduced to the different definitions attributed to

reading and to the different reading models and strategies employed by readers. Students should know the different types of contextual clues and the different conditions under which they use the guessing strategy and its requirements such as the prior linguistic knowledge, the amount of reading practice and the learners' level.

Aim of the study

This research work discusses the effects of using “the guessing from context strategy” on the readers' improvement in inferring vocabulary meaning. It also exploits the ways of training students to use this technique to facilitate reading comprehension.

Statement of the Problem

Should we teach Algerian LMD students of English as a FL at the University of Constantine the guessing from context strategy? If we do so, does this teaching of the strategy improve their ability to infer the meaning of unknown words?

Hypothesis

We hypothesize that if we train students in using contextual clues while reading this will improve their ability of guessing the meaning of unknown vocabulary items.

Definition of Variables

General Definition

The readers' ability to understand a reading text and to cope with the vocabulary problem is related to the skill of using available contextual clues or the GFC strategy. These cues provide a great help for inferring the meaning of unknown encountered vocabulary items.

Operational Definition

The students are trained in the use of the strategy of guessing the meaning of vocabulary items from the context and from the different contextual clues that help in the process of guessing. This training begins with a pretest and ends up with a posttest where students are supposed to put into practice what they have learnt about the GFC strategy.

Tools of Investigation

In order to test the hypothesis stated above, we have adopted an experimental design where one group of students is pre-tested, treated and then post-tested. These are first- year university students of English at the Department of English, University of Mentouri, Constantine. They will be administered a pre-test to evaluate their level in using the GFC strategy. They will, then, receive some training in the use of this strategy for four weeks during the academic year 2005-2006. In the end, a post-test will be

given to this group. Finally, the scores will be analysed and compared with scores of other studies done by other researchers such as Ames (1966), Lui and Nation (1984), Nation and Coady (1988).

Structure of the Study

The dissertation consists of five chapters dealing with a review of the literature relevant to the topic and the training of students in using the strategy of guessing from context. The first three chapters deal only with review of the literature related to the topic. The fourth chapter is devoted to the treatment the participants will undergo. Finally, in the fifth chapter, we will analyse and discuss the scores of the students' use of this strategy.

The first chapter serves as an introduction to the topic. It introduces the skill of reading and the reasons for which students read in a foreign languages. Then, a quick overview on the different theories of reading is presented.

The second chapter discusses the vocabulary problem in general and its relation to reading comprehension in particular. It casts light on the factors which make text comprehension difficult and ends up with some strategies to solve this problem.

The third chapter is the most important one since it deals mainly with the strategy of guessing starting with the definition of context, the

kinds of context, and the reasons for using contextual clues and the way students are trained in using this strategy.

The fourth chapter differs in content from the three preceding ones since it deals mainly with the experimental part of our research work. Here, the students will be administered the pre-test before having any training work. Then, they will be trained in using the GFC strategy in real context for four weeks before they are administered the post-test in order to evaluate their improvement in inferring vocabulary meaning from context. Finally, the scores will be analysed, discussed and interpreted.

In the fifth chapter, we will discuss the different findings that could be drawn from this study together with their pedagogical implications. We will also pinpoint the limitations of this study and the possible further research work that may be carried out by other researchers.

Chapter One

Reading

Introduction

Reading in a foreign language (FL) is the most important way through which learners get in touch with the language. Most of these learners have fewer chances of confronting the FL outside the class because the language is neither spoken nor written out of the campus. Thus, reading becomes the only place where they can get in touch with the target language (TL); that is why; it should be given more importance. In fact, all the language skills are introduced during the reading session. This importance is stressed by Carrell (1988: 1) when she says that “for many students, reading is by far the most important of the four skills in a second language, particularly in English as a second or a foreign language”. Eskey (2005), too, emphasizes the importance of reading when he says:

For second language learners, reading may be both a means to the end of acquiring the language, as a major source of comprehensible input, and an end in itself, as the skill that many serious learners most need to employ... [Students] may need to read it in order to access the wealth of information recorded exclusively in the language (Eskey, 2005: 563).

Krashen (1993; cited in Eskey, 2005: 563) explains this importance of reading to learners of English as a FL. He claims that students who read frequently

acquire, involuntary and without conscious effort, nearly all the so-called "language skills" many people are so concerned about. They will become adequate readers, acquire a large vocabulary, develop the ability to understand and use complex grammatical constructions, develop a good writing style, and become good (but not necessarily perfect) spellers.

Historically speaking, reading has always been neglected in the teaching of foreign languages. The main focus was on the spoken form as it was exemplified in the Audio-Lingual Approach or the Mimicry Memorization Method. In the 1980's, more importance started to be given to reading and more research work appeared. Of course, this is always due to the role attributed to reading in the learning of words. Smith (1985: 67) compares the learning of words through reading to the learning of speech through the practice of the skill of speaking. Alkin (1992: 1081), also, stresses this role of reading when he says that "those who read more acquire even more vocabulary; thus, the gap between the haves and the have-nots".

In this chapter, we will discuss the different theories and definitions given to reading. We will try to go through the different kinds

of reading materials and through the different reading models. We will also go through the various reading strategies employed by readers in their struggle to achieve comprehension while reading different types of reading materials.

1.1 Definition of Reading

Researchers have given different definitions of reading but there is no complete agreement on one definition. According to Smith (1985: 99-102) “reading is mistakenly considered as the decoding of letters to sounds [...] but reading involves illustrations, descriptions and analysis [...]. So reading is extracting information from a text”. In this case, reading is more than interpreting the sounds carried by the letters; it goes beyond that to getting messages from a written text. Smith also adds that two kinds of information are necessary in reading: visual information got from the printed page and non-visual information which includes our understanding of the language, our familiarity with the topic, our general ability in reading, and our knowledge of the world (*ibid*: 14-15).

Another researcher who also emphasizes the idea of transmitting a message from a writer to a reader using the print as a code is Davies. She says: “Reading is private. It is a mental or cognitive process which involves a reader in trying to follow and respond to a message from a

writer who is distant in space and time” (Davies 1995: 1). The same idea is given by Alderson (2002: 3) who defines reading as an interaction between a reader and a text, an operation which is called process. The latter includes looking at the print, decoding the marks on the page, deciding what they mean and how they relate to each other, and also thinking about what the reader is reading. This process leads to an output referred to as comprehension or understanding. To reach this product, the reader uses his past experiences and his cognitive abilities to understand what the writer has transmitted. So, comprehending what is read is based on the reader’s previous experiences (Badraoui 1992: 16). The idea of understanding the message sent by a writer is also stressed by Day & Bamford (1998: 12) who state that: “Reading is the construction of meaning from a printed or written message. The construction of meaning involves the reader connecting information from the written passage with previous knowledge to arrive at meaning- at an understanding”.

Another trend in the study of reading is led by Goodman who defines reading as “a psycholinguistic guessing game in which the reader reconstructs as best as he can a message which has been encoded by a writer as a graphic display” (Goodman, 1967; cited in Samuals & Kamil, 1988: 23). As Grabe describes Goodman’s perception of reading which is seen as an

...active process of comprehending [where] students need to be taught strategies to read more efficiently (e.g., guess from context, define expectations, make inferences about the text, skim ahead to fill in the context, etc.(1991; cited in Alyoucef, 2005 on-line pages).

A similar definition is given by Grellet who has described reading as “a constant process of guessing and what one brings to the text is often more important than what he finds in it” (1981: 07). Again, here the stress is still on the importance of prediction and guessing skills while reading. Therefore, reading is considered as an activity of predicting and guessing where the reader brings his or her prior information to the text including background and personal interpretation.

Nuttall (1982: 2) gives three definitions of reading. In the first, she sees reading as decoding, deciphering or simply recognizing words. The second definition considers reading as articulating, speaking or producing words. In the third definition, she includes understanding or interpreting meaning. This idea of decoding is also adopted by Harmer when he says that reading is “an exercise dominated by the eyes and the brain. The eyes receive messages and the brain then has to work out the significance of these messages” (Harmer, 2001: 153).

From the above different definitions, we can get close to a definition of reading which combines all the trends. Thus, reading includes

the decoding of symbols and their interpretation. This process is not only limited to the words themselves but goes beyond them to the reader's prior knowledge of the topic and the related information. In other words, we can say that there are three reading theories (Vaezi, 2006 online pages): the traditional view which focuses on the printed form of the text; the cognitive view that enhances the role of background knowledge in addition to what appears on the printed page; and finally, the metacognitive view which is based on the control and manipulation that a reader can have on the act of comprehending a text.

I.2 Reading Materials

In our daily life, we are faced with different types of reading materials. Reading has become an unavoidable activity. So, learners or readers, in general, can practise the skill of reading according to their needs. They can read novels, short stories, plays, poems, specialized articles, reports, instructions, road maps, telephone directories, advertisements and catalogues ...etc. In fact, what we read is determined by our purpose of reading. This reading can take different forms as identified by Day and Bamford (1988: 11) like academic reading, reading the comics, reading the television listings, skimming an article in a magazine or a newspaper, reading aloud to children and so on.

1.3 Reading Purposes

The purpose of reading in a FL differs from one person to another according to the context and the reader's motives. According to Harmer (1991: 200), two main motives for reading are identified:

Instrumental: In this case, the reader wants to have some clear aims as reading a road sign to know where to go.

Pleasurable: Here, the reader wants to have some pleasure as in the case of reading magazines or newspapers, poetry ...etc.

However, reading in the FL classroom has different aims which are related to the language learning such as teaching pronunciation, teaching the language itself which includes vocabulary, structures and so on (Nuttall 1982: 19). But when students have no need to use the FL outside the classroom, then the function of this language becomes sterile and so is the reason for reading in this foreign language; that is, to learn to read it only (*ibid*: 19). Thus, the purpose of reading in a FL varies from one context to another (linguistic and extra linguistic needs) and from one person to another.

Davies (1995: 133-4), too, classifies these reading purposes in five categories:

1-Reading for pleasure: It involves reading to follow a piece of narration and to enjoy the sound and rhyme or rhythm of a literary text.

2-Reading for a general impression: It aims at gaining an idea of the writer's point of view, having a global impression of the tone of a text, and deciding whether or not to read the text.

3-Reading for organizing reading and study: In this category, the reader identifies the important content of a text, answers specific questions and decides which section of a text to start studying.

4- Reading for learning content or procedures. Here the reader tries to gain a comprehension of new concepts, to get information from the text and to follow instructions.

5. Reading for language learning: In this category, Readers try to interpret the text, literally and morphologically, to learn new vocabulary, to identify useful structures or collocations, to use the text as a model for writing and to practise pronunciation.

Marinak *et al.* (1997: 3) identifies three main purposes for reading:

-Reading for literary experience: It involves reading literary works such as novels, short stories; poems, etc... This type of reading requires the reader's knowledge of the literary styles used for every literary genre.

-Reading for information: It includes reading articles in newspapers and magazines, and specialized books on particular topics. It requires the reader's awareness and interpretation of charts, footnotes, diagrams, subheadings, and tables...etc.

-Reading to perform a task: It involves reading bus or train schedules, television programmes, directions for games, recipes... etc. It requires the understanding of the purposes and structure of documents that guide the selection and the application of information found.

To conclude out, we can say that there are as many different reading purposes as the number of readers since these purposes may change from one reader to another and from one text to another and even inside the same text.

I.4 Models of the Reading Process

What happens in the mind and what the eyes do during the reading process is a question which has been asked since the early beginning of research on reading. From Aristotle to Galen, to Epicurus, and to Ibn El Haitham, the process of reading has amazed researchers who gave different interpretations and explanations to this process. Recently, researchers have identified three main theories or models of reading. One is purely traditional and is called the bottom-up process. The second is psychological or cognitive and called the top-down process. The final one is a metacognitive process and is a combination of the previous ones. But before dealing with these processes, a brief definition of a reading model is given.

I.4.1 Definition of a Model of Reading

A model of reading, as defined by Davies, (1995: 57) is “a formalized, usually visually represented theory of what goes on in the eyes and the mind when readers are comprehending (or miscomprehending) a text”. She also describes a model as “a systematic set of guesses or predictions about a hidden process” (*ibid*, 1995: 57). Three main models are identified. One is based on phonics and is referred to as the bottom-up model. The second involves thinking and is called the top-down model. The final one, the interactive model, is a combination of the bottom-up and the top-down processes.

I.4.2 The Bottom-Up Model

A bottom-up model of reading describes reading as a process of simply identifying letters, words and sentences by scanning the page from left to right (Lynch and Hudson 1991: 219). It is associated with behaviourism in the 1940’s and the 1950s and with phonic approaches to the teaching of reading which stress that children need to learn to recognize letters before they can read words (Alderson, 2002: 16). So, in this model little emphasis is given to the influence of the reader’s world knowledge, contextual information, and other strategies (Dechant 1991, on-line pages). He adds that:

Bottom-up processes operate on the principle that the written text is hierarchically organized (i.e. on the grapho-phonetic, phonemic, syllabic, morphemic, word, and sentence levels) and that the reader first processes the smallest linguistic unit, gradually compiling the small units to decipher and comprehend the higher unit.

One of the proponents of this model is Gough who defines reading as a process of series: letter-by-letter visual analysis which leads to the recognition of every word, syntactic features, and the meanings are finally accessed (1972; cited in Davies 1995: 60). This idea of series is also advocated by Alderson (2002: 16) when he describes the bottom up model as a serial one where the reader starts with the written word, recognizes graphic stimuli and decodes them to sounds, recognizes words and then decodes meaning.

To sum up the features of this model, we can say that it proceeds from simple to more complex; that is, readers need first to identify the letter features. Then they link these features to recognize letters. After that, they combine letters to recognize spelling patterns. Finally, they link the spelling patterns to recognize words and then proceed to sentence, paragraph and text-level processing (Boothe *et al.* on-line pages).

The criticism that can be attributed to this model is that the serial processing proposed by Gough can be too hard for the readers' short term

or working memory (Gough, 1972; in Davies, 1995: 60). Another weakness is that there are at least 166 different grapho-phonetic rules which cover the regular spelling-to-sound correspondences of English words that are not easy to teach (Smith, 2004: 141); that is, the same letter may have completely different pronunciations according to the context. In addition to this, it neglects completely the role of the sentence-context and the reader's prior knowledge in the understanding of word meaning (Abisamara, 2001 on-line pages). Eskey (1973; cited in Carrel *et al.*, 1988: 3), too, mentions that the decoding model is inadequate because there is an underestimation of the contribution of the reader who makes predictions and processes information. In addition, it fails to recognize that students use their expectations about the text based on their knowledge of the language and how it works.

I.4.3 The Top-Down Model

Because of the shortcomings of the bottom-up model, another approach, different from the latter, is brought out. It is the top-down reading model which was proposed by Goodman (1967) and Smith (1971). Goodman defines reading as “an interaction between reader and written language, through which the reader attempts to reconstruct a message from the writer” (1968:15). Proponents of this model suggest that the processing of a text begins in the mind of the reader with meaning-driven processes.

It refers to the selection of the fewest and most productive elements from a text in order to make sense of it. From this perspective, readers identify letters and words only to confirm their assumptions about the meaning of the text (Dechant, 1991 on-line pages). Thus, the emphasis in this model is on the reader's background knowledge while interpreting texts or to put it in other words, the importance is put on schema theory; that is, networks of information stored in the brain which act as filters for incoming information. So, top means the use of the knowledge of the reader; bottom is the printed text (Abisamara, 2001 on-line).

The proponents of this model generally agree that comprehension is the basis for decoding skills, not a singular result; and meaning is brought to print, not derived from it. In this process, reading has been characterized as "a psychological guessing game" (Goodman, 1967; cited in Samuels & Kamil, 1988: 23) in which the reader is seen as an active part in the reading process. He or she uses all what he or she already knows and matches it with the meaning derived from the text (Dubin and Bycina 1991: 197).

According to Goodman (1988: 16) readers employ five processes in their reading:

-Recognition-initiation: Here the brain recognizes a graphic display in the visual field as a written language and initiates reading.

-Prediction: it includes the anticipation and prediction.

-Confirmation: Since there is prediction, the brain is going to verify them; thus, confirms or disconfirms them.

-Correction: Once the predictions are disconfirmed, the brain corrects initial predictions.

Termination: Here, the brain terminates the reading when the reading task is completed.

However, according to Barnett (1989), this approach specifies only four processes in reading. They are summarized in the following:

First, readers make predictions about the grammatical structure in a text, using their knowledge of the language and supplying semantic concepts to get meaning from structure. Then, they sample the print to confirm their predictions. They neither see nor need to see every letter or word. The more highly developed the readers' sense of syntax and meaning, the more selective the readers can be sampling. After sampling, they confirm their guesses or, alternatively, correct themselves if what they see doesn't make sense or if the graphic input predicted is not there (pp.19-20).

This model has certain disadvantages as mentioned by Stanovich (1980; cited in Abisamara, on-line pages). For him, the reader has not sometimes the knowledge of the topic he or she reads about. Therefore, s/he cannot generate predictions. The second problem is that even if a

skilled reader can generate predictions, this would take much longer than it would to recognize the words.

To sum up the main features of this model, we notice that readers use their knowledge of syntax and semantics to reduce their dependence on the print and phonics of the text. Moreover, a great importance is given to certain kinds of activities such as using the context for guessing the meaning of unknown words, previewing and making predictions.

I.4.4 The Interactive Model

Because both the bottom up and the top down approaches are not adequate models, an alternative model known as the interactive model is brought out. It tries to combine the positive aspects of the two models and to avoid the criticism raised against each; thus, making of it one of the most important approaches to the theory of reading today (Alderson, 2002: 18).

This model can be described as a reading model that recognizes the interaction of bottom-up and top-down processes at the same time throughout the reading process. Here, every component in this process can interact with any other component. Processing is now considered to be parallel rather than serial (Grabe, 1991; cited in Alderson, 2002: 18). One of the proponents of this approach is Rumelhart who defines it as an “alternative

to serial, bottom-up models by incorporating the possibility of parallel processing; that is, simultaneous processing of information from more than one source” (1977; cited in Davies, 1995: 63).

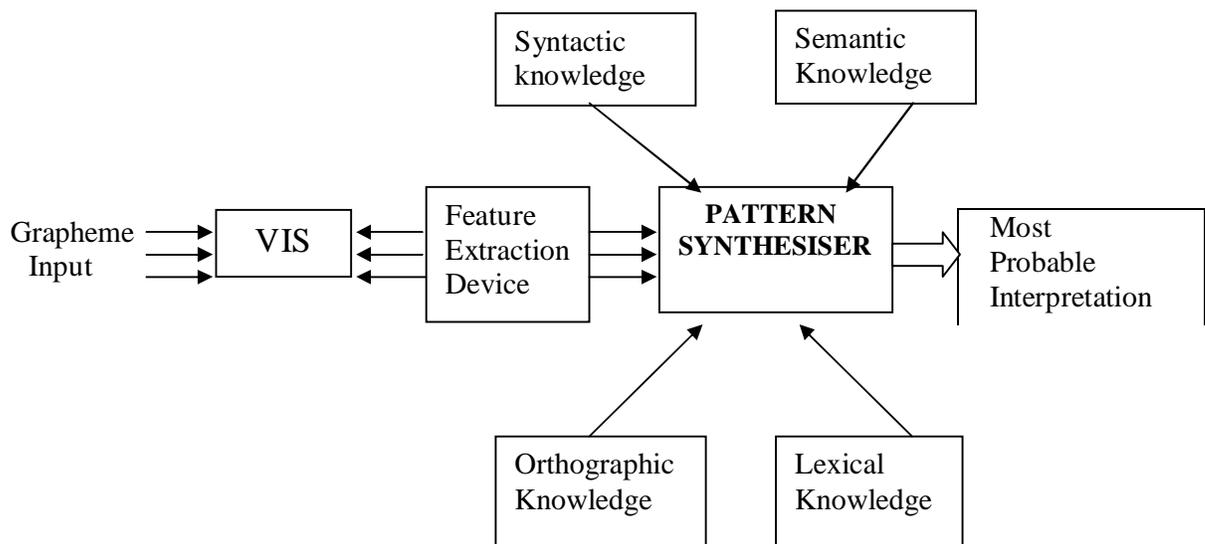
Dechant (1991, on-line pages), too, describes the interactive model as a model where the reader constructs meaning by the selective use of information from all sources of meaning (graphemic, phonemic, morphemic, syntax, semantics) without any respect to any order. Therefore, all sources of knowledge come together and the reading process is the product of the use of all these sources (Davies 1995: 64).

As shown in diagram 1, for Rumelhart, the comprehension process in the interactive model is described as follows:

First, the reader scans visual information from the printed words, then the important features of this information are sent to a message center or pattern synthesizer, where the reader uses his or her prior knowledge and linguistic knowledge to interpret the information. In this approach, the reader plays an active role in trying to make meanings from the printed material. Various sources such as feature extraction, orthographic knowledge, lexical knowledge, syntactic knowledge and semantic knowledge are referred to when the reader tries to interpret the printed material. In his or her attempt to interpret the reading material, various sources of knowledge interact with each other. Reading also entails the

reader’s ability to “compensate his deficiencies” (Stanovich, 1980; cited in Abisamara, online pages). Simply, this enables the reader to “at any level compensate for his deficiencies at any other level’ (Samuels and Kamil, 1988: 32). This reading model makes it possible for researchers to theorize how good and poor readers read.

Diagram 1 Graphic Representation of the Interactive Model



(1977; cited in Davies, 1995: 64)

In the end of this section, we think that the interactive model provides practice in both bottom-up and top-down strategies; that is why, it is more reliable than other models since over reliance on one of the models may lead to difficulties in reading (Dubin and Bycina, 1991: 198).

I.5 Reading Strategies

Dealing with the reading text differs from one student to another and from one teacher to another. In many cases, students are assigned a text and asked to answer a certain number of comprehension questions. This procedure is, in fact, testing not teaching. It aims at determining whether students are able to extract information from a text or not, but it doesn't provide them with any strategies to become good readers.

Generally, readers use various strategies to facilitate the reading task. Davies (1995:10) mentions some of these techniques which include regression and rereading, reading aloud, using contextual clues for guessing the meaning of unknown words, formulating questions, using background knowledge, sometimes changing the pace of reading, and checking and revising first interpretations.

The purpose of any reader when reading a text is to get meaning. As it is put by Smith (1985:120), to read for meaning directly is the best strategy. Thus, good readers face the printed text with one idea in mind: to read to get sense or comprehension. The various strategies readers use to tackle the problem of understanding are summarized in Dubin and Bycina (1991: 202-209), Alyoucef (2005 online) and Marinak *et al.* (1997: 42-72). These strategies are ordered in three stages:

The First stage is the Pre-reading or Before Reading Phase which aims at activating the students' prior knowledge about the topic and introducing necessary language needed for coping with the passage to be read, and also the anticipation of meaning. At this stage, readers preview and survey the text to identify its type and to set a purpose for their reading. These readers use their personal knowledge about the subject to have a global prediction about it. Some of the common techniques employed at this stage include the use of visual aids, role plays, word association tasks and general class discussions.

The Second is the While-Reading or During Reading Phase. Here, the aim is to help students to understand the context of the text and to perceive its structure. Readers start by assessing and revising their initial predictions. This is done through asking themselves rhetoric questions, making associations, retaining important points or clarifying confusions. Then, if they are not sure of their predictions they use certain fix-up strategies such as stopping and going back over the confusing parts.

The final stage is the After-Reading or Post-Reading Phase. It is the stage where readers are expected to reconstruct and extend meaning. Readers should be able to retell what was read, summarize and evaluate it. The most important activity here is to integrate the new acquired

information from the text with what the students have in their background knowledge.

The three stages do not need to be followed blindly while teaching reading. In certain cases one step can be cut or mixed with another if the context needs to do so.

L6 Types of Reading

As it is mentioned earlier in 1.3 and 1.5, the way we read is determined by the type of reading we are faced with and our purpose in this reading. In fact, readers approach a poem in a way different from the one when approaching a scientific article related to their specialization. The same thing is true when reading road signs and reading novels.

Researchers have identified certain types of reading. Davies (1995: 135-40) mentions four types: Receptive reading as in the case of reading a narrative, skim reading which is characterized by rapid establishment of what the text is about before reading it., and scanning; that is, reading for particular piece of information. He also adds two other types of reading: “listen read” and “practice read”. The former refers to the fact of listening to an oral reading of a text, but the latter is considered as a step-by-step struggle through the text using hesitations or rereading strategies (*ibid*).

Other researchers in the field of reading as Grellet (1981), Nuttall (1982), and Alyoucef (2005 online pages) have agreed on four types of reading:

Skimming: This means running the eyes over a printed text to get its main ideas. Nuttall (1982: 34) defines skimming as “glancing rapidly a text to determine its gist”. Generally, this is done through reading the first and last paragraph or just reading the topic sentences of each paragraph of course this will save time and effort on the part of the reader.

Scanning: It means going quickly through a text to look for a particular piece of information or even key words and phrases. Nuttall (*ibid*) also gives a definition when she says that scanning is

glancing rapidly through a text either to search for a specific piece of information (e.g. a name or a date) or to get an initial impression of whether the text is suitable for a given purpose (e.g. whether a book on gardening deals with the cultivation of a particular vegetable).

Extensive Reading: This kind of reading refers to the reading practised outside the academic class. It can be reading for entertainment or pleasure. It helps the learners to develop their reading ability and introduces texts that are addressed to all language speakers and that are published in the original language (Hedge, 2003; cited in Alyoucef, 2005 online pages).

Intensive Reading: This kind of reading is usually referred to as guided reading. Its aim is to make the reader give more attention to the text and to get a deep understanding of this text. Students usually read a page to discover the meaning conveyed and to be familiar with the writing mechanisms used.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have given a brief introduction to reading together with the different definitions attributed to it. We have seen that researchers have identified three main theories: traditional, cognitive and metacognitive, or what is called the bottom-up model, the top-down and the interactive model. Then, we have dealt with the different purposes of reading that differ from one reader to another. These reading purposes are only achieved by readers if they use certain reading strategies that change according to the type of reading we are engaged in. All in all, the reading process can not be understood unless we go through these reading theories.

Chapter Two

Reading and Vocabulary

Introduction

Vocabulary and reading are always interrelated and the reading session has always been the best place where vocabulary problems are discussed (Seal, 1991: 97). Readers cannot understand a reading passage unless they have certain amount of vocabulary knowledge. More than this, Laufer says that “no text comprehension is possible, either in one’s native language or in a foreign language, without understanding the text’s vocabulary” (1997: 20).

The importance of vocabulary in reading or reading for vocabulary is stressed by many researchers. Fengning (1994: 39) states that one of the objectives of reading classes is to enlarge readers’ vocabulary luggage, and vocabulary acquisition is done through reading. Eskey (2005: 567), too, stresses this strong correlation between reading and knowledge of vocabulary. He says:

It is now well understood that the best (some would argue the only) way to acquire the extensive vocabulary required for reading ...is reading itself, and it is equally well understood that a prerequisite for such reading is an extensive vocabulary.

Despite this importance, vocabulary teaching was neglected in the language acquisition theories in the past. It was only in the 1970's that interest in vocabulary began. This is mainly due to the different trends in linguistic theories which stressed the importance of structure over the importance of the word. But reading comprehension is not only hindered by the vocabulary problems, there are other difficulties related to the reading text and the reader himself which make reading comprehension difficult. In this chapter, the issue of vocabulary and its relation to reading comprehension will be discussed together with the different vocabulary strategies adopted by either teachers of reading or learners themselves.

2.1 Reading Comprehension

The relationship between reading and reading comprehension has been subject to many research works. Many researchers as Ur (1991: 138) link comprehension to reading and without it there is no reading at all. In fact, comprehension is viewed as the “essence of reading” (Durkin, 1993; cited in Langenberg et al., 2000: 4-39); thus, without comprehension reading would be empty and meaningless.

Reading comprehension is defined as the process of extracting and consulting meaning through interaction and involvement in the written language (Snow, 2000: 11); thus, understanding a reading passage means

getting the message conveyed in this passage. This comprehension involves three elements:

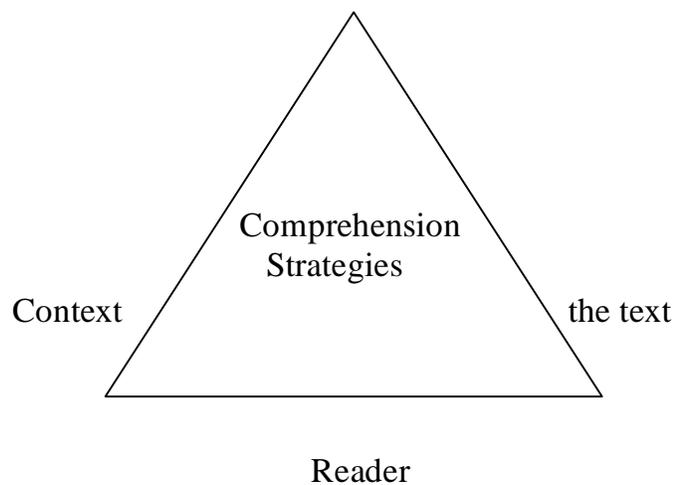
- The reader who is doing the comprehension using his or her capacities, knowledge and experiences.
- The text which can be understood and which can be either printed or electronic.
- The activity in which comprehension is a part such as the purposes, the processes, and the consequences associated with the act of reading.

Other researchers define comprehension or the understanding of a written text as the extraction of information from this text (Grellet, 1981: 3). From this definition, we notice that reading comprehension means getting information from a text either by using linguistic information or using extra linguistic contextual information. Thus, reading without comprehension is not considered as true reading according to Ur who says that “a foreign language learner who says, ‘I can read words but I don’t know what they mean’ is not, therefore, reading, in this sense. He or she is merely decoding- translating written symbols into corresponding sounds” (1991: 138)

To summarize what is said above, the purpose of reading is mainly identified as getting a message from a text through certain kinds of

processes involving a reader as the major factor. Thus, “reading is a dynamic process in which the reader interacts with the text to extract meaning.” (Marinak *al* .1997: 2).The same idea is expressed by Knuth and Jones (1991, online pages) who say that “comprehension results from an interaction among the reader, the strategies the reader employs, the material being read, and the context in which reading takes place”. This is represented in the following diagram:

Diagram 2 Knut and Jones Comprehension Model



Knuth & Jones (1991, online pages)

2.2 Impediments of Reading Comprehension

Understanding a reading text can be difficult for readers. This may be due to the text itself or to the readers. Text comprehension is a complex task that involves mental skills and processes. Consequently, there are

many aspects of the reading process where difficulties may arise and which, in turn, affect text comprehension. These aspects involve different text-levels as the word, the sentence, and the discourse, in addition to the readers' cognitive abilities and the amount of exposure to print (Cain & Oakhill, 2003: 314-332), and the reader's background knowledge (Marshall and Gilmour, 1993: 69).

2.2.1 Word-Level Deficits

Cain and Oakhill (2003: 314-332) summarize the word level deficits which may lead to text comprehension failure in the following points:

- The reader's speed in the decoding of letters: At this level any slow and inaccurate reading of words may cause difficulty in reading comprehension since good readers are also good decoders as it is stressed by Eskey (1988: 94):

Rapid and accurate decoding of language is important to any kind of reading.... Good readers know the language. They can decode... for the most part, not by guessing from context or prior knowledge of the world, but by a kind of automatic identification that requires no conscious cognitive effort. It is precisely this "automaticity" that frees the minds of fluent readers of a language to think about and interpret what they are reading.

- **Phonological Skills:** These skills are strongly associated with word reading development and may be a cause of reader's poor comprehension.
- **Vocabulary and semantic knowledge:** As it is mentioned above, the reader's knowledge of vocabulary correlates a lot with the ability to understand a reading text and readers who have rich vocabulary knowledge can have better text comprehension than those who lack this knowledge. Pressley (2000 online pages) states that good comprehenders tend to have good vocabularies. In addition, readers who have prior knowledge about the topic of the text have better comprehension.

2.2.2 Sentence level Deficits

After the recognition of words and the grasping of their meanings, the focus now is on the understanding of the sentence as a whole. One of the most important deficits at the sentence level is the syntactic knowledge. Knowing about the syntactic structure of the sentence can help a lot in the determination of the meaning of the latter as a whole. This syntactic knowledge includes the knowledge of the meanings and order of the noun and verb phrases, the subject, the verb, and the object. Grammatical knowledge may make comprehension easier since it facilitates the detection and correction of errors while reading. Poor comprehenders also do not use sentence context to understand words.

2.2.3 Discourse level Deficits

At this level, less skilled comprehenders have difficulties with a wide range of text-level comprehension skills including making inferences, anaphoric processing, structuring stories, metacognitive knowledge, monitoring skills, and the use of sentence context.

2.2.4 Cognitive Abilities

Other comprehension deficits lie in the storage of verbal information. Students who have limitations in their ability to store and process information have problems in text comprehension. This is mainly related to their short-term memory or their working memory. Another source of comprehension problems is the general verbal ability. A student who has a basic level of intelligence is able to read and comprehend texts better than one who lacks this ability. In addition to these deficits, the amount of exposure to print may influence text comprehension. The more students are exposed to print, the better they can comprehend texts.

2.2.5 Prior Knowledge

As it is mentioned by Pressley (*ibid*) and Marshall and Gilmour (1993: 69), this knowledge is found in the reader's mind and not in the text. It is defined as the knowledge that the reader has when he or she begins to read the text. Prior knowledge includes background knowledge

(the information that authors assume that readers should have), world knowledge which includes knowledge about things other than what the text is about, domain knowledge which means the specific knowledge about a particular specialized subject, and common sense knowledge; that is, the kind of knowledge that every one has. So readers who possess rich prior knowledge about the topic of a reading text often understand better than their classmates with low prior knowledge.

2.3 The Vocabulary Issue

As it is mentioned earlier, one of the main factors which hinder reading comprehension is the vocabulary problem. In the past, little importance was given to the teaching of vocabulary since nearly all teaching approaches neglected this skill. In The Grammar Translation Method which was the dominant approach in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, learners were supposed to translate classical literature to their mother tongue. In the twentieth century, and because of the criticism attributed to this method, new methods appeared. This included the Direct Method, the Audio lingual Method and the Communicative approach. The main idea behind the Direct Method is that languages are learnt through hearing them spoken and engaging in conversation. In this method, no translation is permitted and teachers resort to miming,

sketches, or explanations in the FL as if learners were pledged in a linguistic island (Larsen-Freeman, 1986: 18).

The next major method that came after the Direct Method was the Audio-lingual Approach which was developed for American soldiers to learn foreign languages quickly. It aimed at achieving accurate oral production with restricted vocabulary.

In the seventies, the Communicative approach was introduced and dominated the last decades of the twentieth century. In this approach, attention is drawn to the importance of communicative competence and knowledge of the rules of language use (Hymes, 1972; cited in Chen, 1988: 142). Still even in this approach, vocabulary has not been a primary concern since it is thought that vocabulary develops naturally through exposure to comprehensible input in meaningful context (Krashen, 1989; cited in Giridharan and Conlan, 2003, on-line pages). Therefore, there is no real need for direct vocabulary instruction.

It is until recently that interest has been attributed to vocabulary teaching and many researchers, as it will be discussed later, have suggested strategies to deal with the vocabulary issue. But before that we can start by defining the term vocabulary itself and the notion of knowing

a word. We also need to know the amount of vocabulary needed by students and how it is to be taught.

2.3.1 Vocabulary Knowledge

According to Lehr *et al.* (on-line pages) and Langenberg *et al.* (2000: 4-15/16), the term vocabulary refers to the knowledge of words and their meanings. However, this definition is too limited because words come in two forms: oral and print. Oral vocabulary refers to the words we recognise and use in listening and speaking. Print vocabulary includes those words that we recognise and use in reading and writing. Word knowledge also comes in two kinds: receptive and productive. By receptive vocabulary, we mean the words that we recognise when we hear or see them. Productive vocabulary includes the words that we use when we speak or write.

To summarize these definitions of the term vocabulary, we can say that it is defined as the knowledge of words and word meanings in both oral , print language in productive and receptive forms, or to put it in another way, vocabulary refers to the kind of words known by students to read a text with comprehension.

2.3.2 Word Mastery

To decide about the meaning of a word is not an easy task because it involves different aspects of knowledge as stated by Richard (1976; cited in Read, 2002: 25-27). For him, knowing a word means how often this word is encountered in speech or in print. It also means knowing the use of this word according to variations and situations. In addition to this, it means knowing the syntactic behaviour associated with the word, its form and its different derivations. Moreover, this knowledge includes the semantic value of the word and the different meanings associated with it. Richard's eight assumptions emphasize that to know a word, one should be aware of:

- its relative frequency in the language;
- its register characteristics, which may include social, temporal and geographic variations, and field and mode of discourse;
- the syntactic behavior associated with the word;
- its underlying form and the derivations that can be made from this form;
- the network of associations between that word and other words in the language, which may include such associative links as antonymy, synonymy, and subordinate, coordinate, and super ordinate classifications;

- its semantic features and connotations; and
- the different meanings associated with the word. (Richard; 1976 cited in Read, 2002:25).

Nation (2005: 583-595) also mentions three aspects of knowledge involved in knowing a word. As it is shown in table 1, there are three groups: knowledge of the form of the word (spoken, written or word parts), knowledge of the meaning of the word (form and meaning, concepts for the word and what it refers to, and knowledge of other words whose meaning can be associated with); and knowledge of the use of this word. This includes the grammatical function and the different constraints on its use.

The difference between Richard’s assumptions and Nation’s components of word knowledge is the distinction between receptive and productive knowledge introduced by Nation. There is a difference between recognizing a word when hearing or seeing it and being able to use it in our daily speech or writing.

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 recognizable in this word?
	P	What word parts are needed to express the meaning?

Meaning

form and	R	What meaning does this word form signal?
meaning	P	What word form can be used to express this meaning?
concept and	R	What is included in the concept?
referents	P	What items can the concept refer to?
association	R	What other words does this make us think of?
	P	What other words could we use instead of this one?

Use

grammatical	R	In what patterns does the word occur?
functions	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	R	Where, when, and how often would we expect to meet this
use (register,	P	Where, when, and how often can we use this word?
frequency, etc.)		

Note. In column 3, R= receptive knowledge. P= productive knowledge.

Nation, 2005: 584

2.3.3 Vocabulary Size and Coverage

According to Nation and Waring (online pages), in order to talk about this idea we need to know the number of words in the target language as a whole and the number of words that native speakers know.

To find out the number of words in English, the first point to consider is to look at a dictionary. Dupuy, 1974; Goulden, Nation & Read, 1990; cited in Nation and Waring (*ibid*) find out that there are 54,000 word families in Webster's third edition. Of course, this excludes compound words, archaic words, abbreviations, proper names, alternative spellings, and dialect forms.

Once the number of words in the TL is determined, the second thing to do is to decide about the size of vocabulary that a native speaker should have. The figures given by Nation and Waring (*ibid*) show that a five year old beginning school child has around 4000 to 5000 word families, but a university graduate is likely to have a vocabulary size of about 20,000 word families. Certainly, this vocabulary size is not always needed or used. Its usefulness is measured by word frequency; that is, how often the word occurs in normal use of language. Generally speaking, a small number of English words occur very frequently, and once learners know them, they will have a good deal of running words.

It is only after these two questions are answered that the number of words needed by learners can be determined. Researchers suggest that second language learners need to know at least 3000 or so high frequency words of the language or coverage of at least 95% of a text (Liu and Nation, 1985; cited in Nation and Waring, on-line).

2.3.4 Importance of Vocabulary in Reading Comprehension

Having a good vocabulary background facilitates reading comprehension since “words are considered as the building blocks of language, the units of meaning from which larger structures such as sentences, paragraphs and whole texts are formed”. (Read, 2000: 1). Everything is related to vocabulary and any reader who lacks the skill of knowing vocabulary meaning will have problems in reading comprehension (Freebody & Anderson, 1983 cited in Cain and Oakhill, 2003: 316). Coady and Huckin (1997: 5), too, insist on this role of vocabulary. For them, vocabulary is central to language and of critical importance to the typical language learner.

The importance of vocabulary knowledge in reading achievement has also been stressed by many other researchers. Cain & Oakhill (2003: 316) also insist that word knowledge is highly correlated with reading comprehension ability. Thus, comprehension is related to the knowledge

of word meaning (Abdullah, 1993: 10) and knowing word meaning is essential to understanding reading texts. Another researcher who has also mentioned this importance of vocabulary is Wilkins (1972: 111) when he says that “without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed”. So, vocabulary is vital for reading achievement as Langenberg *et al.* put it, “the importance of vocabulary knowledge has long been recognized in the development of reading skills. As early as 1924, researchers noted that growth in reading power relies on continuous growth in word knowledge” (2000: 4-15). Alderson (2002: 69-70) argues that in order to have a good understanding of a text, readers need to know at least 95% of the words in the text; otherwise, comprehension is hindered. Getting the meaning of lexical items is not always easy because there are many factors which make words difficult and thus make comprehension impossible.

2.3.5 Purposes of Teaching Vocabulary

The reasons for which we teach vocabulary to FL learners are varied. Pikulski and Templeton (2004: 5 online pages) mention some of them. One reason teachers are concerned about is to facilitate the comprehension of a text that students are assigned to read. If students do not know the meaning of many of the words that they encounter in a text, their comprehension is hindered. Another reason for teaching the meaning

of words is to increase the number of words that students know and can use in different educational, social, and professional areas.

Some teachers advocate the teaching or the introduction of new or unknown words before the reading of the text. Of course, this vocabulary teaching varies from one text to another. So, when words are appropriately defined in the text, there is no need to discuss them before hand. But still there are words that are critical to an understanding of the major topic or theme, thus, they should be introduced and discussed prior to reading.

2.4 Word Difficulties

Readers usually think that new words are difficult to handle and their difficulty hinders reading comprehension; that is why, they should know the reasons why these words are difficult. According to Nuttall (1982: 76-79), there are several factors that make words difficult to understand. She grouped these kinds of difficulty in seven kinds:

Idioms: They are composed of certain number of words whose meaning is not deduced from individual words but from the whole group of words. So, students have to be trained in the use of this kind of words.

Transfer of Meaning: Sometimes, metaphors, metonymy and other similar kinds of transferred meaning cause serious problems for understanding word meaning. The reason for this is that these words do

not mean what they seem to mean. For example, metaphors have always a hidden meaning.

Words with Several Meanings: Many words in English have more than one meaning, and each writer uses a specific word for a particular meaning which is not the usual meaning of the ordinary reader.

Sub-technical words: Some words have specific technical meanings related to a particular field of science which again makes them difficult for readers.

Super ordinates: These are words which have general meaning related to other words which have specific meaning; and in their turn, they are referred to by the more general term. A good example of this kind of words is given by Nuttall (1982: 76-79) and concerns the super ordinate word “building” and its hyponyms: house, school, factory, cinema, hotel ...etc.

Synonyms and Antonyms: This kind of words may cause trouble to learners since there is no exact synonym or antonym to another word.

Irony: Here the difficulty is not in the words themselves but in their use by writers. Nuttall says “irony is probably the most difficult of all uses of language for the student to interpret” (1982: 78).

2.5 Vocabulary Strategies

One of the problems that face learners while they are reading is how to deal with unknown vocabulary items which are key words in the

text and vital for its comprehension. Researchers such as Nuttal, 1982; Seal, 1991; Hatch & Brown, 1995; Nation, 2005; Gu, 2003 (online pages); and Waring (online pages) suggest certain techniques for coping with this problem. Some are teacher- centred; others are learner- centred. But before discussing these techniques, it is necessary to figure out the procedure through which learners handle the problem of unknown words.

Hatch & Brown (1995: 401-425) suggest a five step procedure for dealing with vocabulary issues. The first of these steps is encountering new words. There is a variety of possible ways for doing this including reading books, listening to TV and radio, and reading newspapers and magazines. The second step in the process of vocabulary learning is getting the word form either visual or auditory or both. Learners generally associate new words with words that sound similar in their native language, or write the sounds of words using sound symbols from the native language, associate words that are similar to words in another language they have studied, and see a word that looks like another word already known. The third necessary step for vocabulary learning is getting the word meaning. This step includes many learners' strategies such as asking native English speakers about the meaning of the target words, asking people who speak their native language about the meaning of new words, and asking knowledgeable people to tell them the English word

after explaining what they have understood from it. The fourth essential step is the consolidation of word form and meaning in memory. Here, different kinds of vocabulary learning drills are suggested (flashcards, matching exercises, crossword puzzles ...etc.). The final stage in vocabulary learning is using the word which is the testing of the learner's understanding of these words. Once they use the new learnt word, learners become confident about their word knowledge.

2.5.1 Teacher-Centred Strategies

Inside the classroom, the teacher's interference is unavoidable; thus, teachers are supposed to adopt strategies and methods to deal successfully with unfamiliar words. This includes unplanned and planned vocabulary teaching.

2.5.1.1 Unplanned Vocabulary Teaching

Seal (1991: 298) defines this term as the "teaching of problem vocabulary that comes up without warning in the course of a lesson". This happens when students feel that they are in need for the meaning of a vocabulary item during a lesson or when the teacher feels that it is necessary to make certain clarifications. Here, the teacher is going to improvise an explanation. For Seal (1991: 298), there are three stages in the unplanned vocabulary teaching. They are referred to as the three Cs:

the stage of conveying meaning; the stage of checking the meaning, and the consolidation stage.

In the first stage, the teacher tries to convey the meaning of the target word using different ways as miming, giving synonyms or an anecdote. In the second stage, s/he checks that the meaning of the unknown word is understood. This may be done through asking the learners questions. In the final stage of this kind of vocabulary teaching, the teacher tries to consolidate the information by urging students to use the word in other contexts.

However, unplanned vocabulary teaching has certain shortcomings as stated by Seal himself (*ibid*, 299). The first of these dangers is that the teacher may not provide enough explanation of the new word; thus, not satisfying students' needs for understanding the meaning of this word. The other danger lies in the fact that this technique is too much time consuming since it takes a lot of time to explain the new word and other related words.

2.5.1.2 Planned Vocabulary Teaching

Hatch & Brown (1995: 415) refers to this technique as “intentional vocabulary instruction”. Seal (1991: 298) defines it as “when the teacher goes into the classroom with an item or a set of vocabulary items that s/he

has decided beforehand will be taught during the course of the lesson". He mentions two types of this kind of vocabulary teaching. The first type is similar to unplanned vocabulary teaching where the teacher predicts that certain vocabulary items will cause problems for students' comprehension. So, he prepares how to teach them. The second type of planned vocabulary teaching can be described as the vocabulary lesson. The latter can occur in isolation to develop the F L learners' stock of vocabulary, or it can be taught as a follow-up to other activities such as reading, listening, discussion and dialogues.

2.5.1.3 Criteria for Choosing Words for Instruction

In order to teach vocabulary using either planned or unplanned strategies, teachers have to choose what words they are going to teach. Research has shown that not all words need to be known in a reading passage and also teaching all words does not increase the readers' understanding (Marinak *et al.*, 1997: 29). How to choose the words to be taught in a particular lesson needs establishing the following criteria (ibid: 29-30): The first criterion insists that teachers teach only the words that are essential for understanding a reading passage since there are many words which do not carry any important ideas or details and may be ignored or skipped. The second criterion is that they teach the words that are common

or generally useful for students to know; that is, the words that students are expected to be familiar with or may encounter in the future.

2.5.2 Learner-Centred Strategies

All the above strategies are teacher dependent; that is, the teacher is going to be the main factor in dealing with the vocabulary issue; that is why, certain researchers as Grellet, 1981; Nuttall, 1982; Smith, 1985; Baudoin *et al.*, 1997; Read, 2000; Langenberg *et al.*, 2000; Rapport, online pages; Moras, online pages; Nation, 2005 and Hunt & Begler, 2005, online pages discussed the strategies adopted by learners when they are reading alone; how are they going to override the question of unknown lexis when there is no teachers' help?. In this case, most Learners react differently to the vocabulary problem according to their lexical abilities and their general knowledge. They use different strategies. These strategies are behaviours that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn or retain new information (O'Malley and Chamot, 1991: 1). So, it is important for teachers to foster their learners' independence so that they can deal with new lexis and expand their vocabulary after the course has finished. These researchers have suggested certain strategies to handle the question of unknown words. These include ignoring the unknown word, using different kinds of dictionaries, and guessing the meaning of

unknown words using contextual clues. Here, we are going to discuss the first two strategies and the last strategy is left for chapter three.

2.5.2.1 Word Ignorance

According to Smith (1985: 94), “the most preferred and efficient strategies for proficient readers when they come across a word that is unfamiliar are to skip or to predict from context (...)”. So, instead of being frightened from unknown words, the reader just tries to skip them. This is considered as the first and basic word attack skill for students and the following procedure can be followed to train students to ignore words (Nuttall, 1982: 75-76).

Nuttall suggests a five-step procedure for training students in the use of the strategy of skipping unknown words. The first step starts with the supplying of an incomplete text (words and phrases omitted). Then, students are asked to answer questions from the incomplete information. The second step is done with the same kind of exercise but this time with difficult words which are not essential for getting the gist of the message and answering the questions. If students do the task, it means that some words can safely be ignored. In the third step, the teacher tries to help students identify the words they must look up. Then, a short text which contains a number of new words is supplied, and students are given a

number of simple questions aiming to test direct understanding. The task, then, is to find out the number of questions that can be answered without looking any words. The fourth stage is an extension of the above exercise; that is, a certain number of new words are included in a text and students look them up in order that the text could be comprehended well to answer the questions. In the end, ignoring certain unknown words is one of the best techniques for readers. Smith (2004: 169) says:

It is not necessary for any reader, and especially not for beginners, to understand the meaning of every thing they attempt to read... They always have the liberty to skip passages and to ignore many small details, either because they are comprehensible or because they are not relevant to their interest or needs.

The technique of skipping unfamiliar words is also advocated by Grellet (1981: 10) who says:

When we read, our eyes do not follow each word of the text one after the other at least in the case of efficient readers. On the contrary, many words or expressions are simply skipped: we go back to check something, or forward to confirm some of our hypotheses.

So, for Grellet, skipping words and expressions is something natural provided that comprehension is not interrupted. But what words do we skip while reading? Of course, we are not going to ignore all unknown words; we just skip words whose meaning is not important to the

comprehension of the text, but how do we determine that their meaning is vitally important to the purpose for reading text?

One of the strategies used to determine if the meaning of a particular word is necessary to the overall meaning of the sentence is to read the sentence without that word and see if a general meaning is obtained. Another strategy is to examine the grammatical function of the word. If it is an adjective or an adverb, readers can probably get by without it. If, on the other hand, an unknown word appears several times and seems to be a key to the general idea, then that word needs to be dealt with. Nouns and verbs are usually important enough to the basic meaning that readers cannot get a general idea without knowing what they mean.

2.5.2.2 Dictionary Use

The use of dictionaries is one of the best ways to learn the meaning of new words. Though, sometimes, it is not advisable to do so, dictionaries are useful for understanding key words, especially for learners reading for a special purpose (Nuttall, 1982: 78-79). In fact, a dictionary is amongst the first things a learner of a FL purchases (Baxter, 1980; cited in Gu, 2003: 6 online pages) and learners carry their dictionaries with them not their grammatical books (Krashen, 1989; cited in Gu, 2003:6).

Generally, learners consult dictionaries to check spelling, look up the meaning of unfamiliar words and confirm the meaning of unknown words. Dictionaries are invaluable tools for learners since they give them independence from the teacher (Moras, Online pages). But students need to be trained in the use of dictionaries so teachers should create occasions where learners practise their use effectively. They can learn how to identify the part of speech of the unknown word as well as contextual clues, which are necessary for finding the most appropriate dictionary entry (Hunt & Begler, 2005 online pages). So, it is very important for readers to be familiar with their dictionary symbols and abbreviations (Baudoin *et al.* 1997: 6).

Nuttall (1982: 79); Gu (2003: 6-8 online pages) and Graves *et al.*, 2004; cited in Lehr *et al.* (Online pages) suggest the following procedure for training learners in the use of dictionaries. First, learners have to decide which words they must look in a dictionary and limit the number to the minimum. The second step concerns the way to find this word. Many students take a long time to find a word in a dictionary, so, training them in using alphabetical order is needed together with the use of the guide words found at the top of each dictionary page. The third step is to make students practise selecting the relevant word meaning they are looking for. Of course, this can be done by giving them a text which includes

unfamiliar words and asking them to choose the most appropriate definition from a suggested list. Regular practice is going to make them more familiar with the use of their dictionary.

There are three categories of dictionaries for FL learners: The bilingual dictionary which provides a translation of target words in the first language and vice versa, the Learners' Monolingual Dictionary which is written only in the FL and appeals to all learners whatever their first language is, and the Standard Monolingual Dictionary which appeals mainly to native speakers.

Another kind of dictionaries used by readers is electronic dictionaries which offer a further option for teachers and learners. E-dictionaries provide both pictures and text; thus, the learning of unfamiliar words becomes more efficient (Chun and Plass, 1996; cited in Hunt & Begler, on-line pages).

Despite the importance attributed to dictionaries in learning the meaning of unknown vocabulary. In many cases, the dictionary may confuse learners, particularly when the unfamiliar word has numerous entries (Hunt & Begler, 2005 on-line). In addition to this, dictionary use is time-consuming and disrupts the flow of reading.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have seen the relationship between reading and reading comprehension. We notice that true reading has the aim of comprehension. We have also dealt with the factors which hinder this comprehension either at the text level, word level, sentence level, or discourse level, in addition to the reader's cognitive abilities and background knowledge. The most important finding in this chapter is that vocabulary is considered as the major obstacle to reading comprehension; therefore, a survey of the different vocabulary strategies is done. From this, we have found that there are two kinds of vocabulary strategies adopted by teachers and readers: Teacher-centred strategies which include planned and unplanned vocabulary instruction and where the teacher is the main actor in the vocabulary lesson and learner-centred strategies which include ignoring unknown or difficult words and using different kinds of dictionaries, in addition, of course, to guessing or inferring vocabulary meaning using different contextual clues like: morphology, reference words, synonyms and antonyms, definitions, punctuation ...etc.

Chapter Three

Guessing Word Meaning from Context

Introduction

As it is mentioned in chapter two, one of the most efficient strategies adopted by learners when dealing with the problem of lexis is guessing the meaning of unknown words using contextual clues or what is called the guessing from context strategy (GFCs). This strategy is advocated by many researchers because they see that words are better recognized when they are taken in context (Nation and Coady, 1988: 103). In our work, we are deeply interested in training learners in the use of the GFC strategy and the way to promote this skill for better inferencing of vocabulary meaning. In this chapter, different definitions of the GFCs will be given together with the different types of contextual clues. In addition, a survey of the various theories which advocate the use of this strategy will be done. This survey is concluded with the factors that affect learners' success in lexical inferencing. Finally, a training procedure in the use of the strategy is suggested, and an evaluation of its efficiency is presented.

3.1 Definition of the GFC Strategy

Guessing vocabulary meaning from context is one of the most frequent strategies used for discovering the meaning of unknown words (Ying, 2000: 18). Many researchers such as Grains and Redman (1986) and Clarke and Nation (1980) insist that learning the meaning of these words should be in context and not in isolation.

For Rapport (online pages), contextual vocabulary learning is a process used by readers to figure out a meaning of an unfamiliar word as it occurs in a particular reading passage or text. This is referred to as guessing or inferring vocabulary meaning from context. He defines this process as

the active, deliberate acquisition of a meaning for a word in a text by reasoning from textual clues and prior knowledge, including language knowledge and hypotheses developed from prior encounters with the word, but without external sources of help such as dictionaries or people. (Rapport, 2000 online pages).

So, for Rapport the most important thing in the process of guessing from context is the exclusion of any sort of external help; thus , it makes readers completely self-dependent.

Carton (1971: 45) also gives a brief definition of the process of inferencing which “is intended to refer to a process of identifying

unfamiliar stimuli... In inferencing, attributes and contexts that are familiar are utilized in recognizing what is not familiar”.

Haastrup (1991; cited in Nassaji, 2004: 108), too, defines this process as making ‘informed guesses’ about the meaning of new words based on the contextual clues available. These include the grammar of sentences and the meanings of words, a paragraph, a whole story or other text. They also include the reader’s expectations and purposes for reading; various aspects of the location and situation in which the person is reading, and even the reader’s entire background knowledge and experience. Another definition similar to the previous one is given by Dycus (1997: 1 online pages) when he says that the context is the information that decreases uncertainty about the different elements of a text, their meanings, and the meaning of the text as a whole. This strategy is generalized to all readers. It is used by both good and poor learners when confronting unknown words (Cain & Oakhill, 2003: 323).

To summarize these definitions, we can say that the GFCs or inferencing strategy has been defined as the connections that learners do when they try to interpret texts. It occurs at all levels of the process of reading comprehension, ranging from integrating the text with background knowledge, to connecting the different parts of the text together and linking known to unknown elements in the text in order to arrive at a

coherent structure of the information in the text (Nassaji, 2004: 176). This information can be morphological, syntactic, and discourse information, in addition to the readers' background knowledge of the subject read about.

3.2 Kinds of Contextual Clues

The term context includes the reader's knowledge of the surrounding text and his or her prior knowledge including knowledge of the language and the meaning hypotheses developed by the reader from prior encounters with the word. The most important thing about context is that it excludes external sources of help such as dictionaries or people. (Rapport a, on-line pages).

One of the most important works that have tried to identify and classify the contextual clues that may be used by readers in their attempt to infer the meaning of unknown words is what Sternberg and Powell ,1983; cited in Read, 2000: 55) have suggested. If we consider this classification shown in table 4, we notice that there are two kinds of context: external and internal. The external context refers to the kinds of semantic information available in the text surrounding the target word but the internal context includes the morphological structure of the word such as affixation. For both types, there are mediating variables that help readers

use these clues effectively. The following table gives more details of these kinds of context clues as provided by Sternberg and Powell (1983):

Table 2 Kinds of Contextual Clues

EXTERNAL CONTEXT

Contextual cues

Temporal cues	when / how often/ for how long does X (the unknown word) occur?
Spatial cues	where can X be found?
Value cues	how valuable or desirable is X? What do people feel about it?
Stative descriptive cues	what are the physical features of X (size shape, colour, odour, feel, etc.)?
Functional descriptive cues	what are the purposes of X? What is it used for?
Causal/ enablement cues	what causes X or enables it to occur?
Class membership cues	what class of things does X belong to?
Equivalence cues	what does X mean? What does it compare or contrast to?

Mediating Variables

- The number of occurrence of the unknown word
- The variability of contexts in which multiple occurrences of the unknown words appear
- The density of unknown words
- The importance of the unknown words to understanding the context in which it is embedded

- The perceived helpfulness of the surrounding context in understanding the meaning of the unknown word
- The concreteness of the unknown word and the surrounding context
- The usefulness of prior knowledge in cue utilisation

INTERNAL CONTEXT

Contextual cues

Prefix cues

Stem cues

Suffix cues

Interactive cues (where two or three word parts convey information in combination)

Mediating variables

- The number of occurrences of the unknown word
- The density of the unknown words
- The importance of the unknown word to understanding the context in which it is embedded
- The usefulness of previously known information in cue utilisation

(From Sternberg and Powell, 1983; cited in Read, 2000: 55)

Becker (online pages), too, divides the context that surrounds a word into two types: the immediate context and the wider context.

-The immediate context contains the verb and its arguments, any preposition linking them and also additional modifiers of the action as adverbs.

-The wider context may cover several sentences and include many types of information as the description of a state, or a causal chain of events.

Nation and Coady (1988: 102) summarize the definition of context in the morphological, syntactic and discourse information in a particular text which can be classified and described in terms of general features. Nuttall (1982: 66-68), Sternberg & Powel (1983, cited in Read, 2000: 54-55), and Fengning (1994: 31) have summarized the different types of contextual clues that may be available in a particular text in the following items:

1) **Morphological Clues**

Students can get the meaning of unknown words by studying the internal morphological features of the target word. According to Nagy & Anderson, 1984; in Hunt and Begler, 2005: 12 (online pages) over 30% of the written word types either are inflected or have a derivational affix and that the majority of words made up of more than one morpheme are predictable based on the meanings of the parts. So, readers can divide the

words into roots and affixes (prefixes or suffixes) or simple parts as in the case of compound words to derive their meaning.

Example1: Babies are born healthier when their mothers have good *prenatal* care.

Here, the word *prenatal* is divided into the prefix (*pre*) which means before and the stem (*natal*) that means birth, therefore, the whole word means before birth.

2) **Definition**

Authors often give a definition of the unknown word by other known or more familiar words. They use cues such as: *is/are, is /are defined as; described as; known as, is/ are called, means/ mean, what this means is, consist of, refer to, may be seen as* .

Example: Many animals live only by killing other animals and eating them. They are called *predatory* animals.

In this example, we have used the key words *are called* to link the definition to the term *predatory animals*.

Example 2: *Inflation* is a rise in the general level of prices you pay for things you buy.

In this example, the unfamiliar word is *inflation* and the signal word is the verb *is*, therefore, inflation= a rise in the general level of prices you pay... etc.

3) Synonyms and Antonyms

The writer pairs the unknown word with a synonym or other closely related words, or even supplies an antonym to that word.

Example1: We had never seen such a large cave: it was simply *enormous*.

The term *enormous* is a synonym of the word *large*.

Example2: To be pretty and not plain, *affluent* and not poor, represents status in certain social groups.

We note that *pretty* and *plain* are opposites. When we see the other pair of words in a parallel construction, we can assume that *affluent* is the opposite of *poor*, and must, therefore, mean rich.

4) Comparison / Contrast Clues

Comparison and contrast usually show the similarities and differences between persons, ideas, and things. Among the possible signal words of this kind of cues are: *but, instead of, even, though, in contrast to, yet, in spite of, although, as opposed to, unlike, despite, however, on the other hand, whereas, like, similarly, in the same way, as, the same as, as just as*.

Example: The ancient *mammoth*, like other elephants, is huge.

The phrase *like other elephants* indicates that the *mammoth* is a type of elephant.

5) Restatement

Writers may use other words, phrases, or sentences to provide the meaning of difficult words. This is called restatement. The writer describes the word again or in a different way. Signal words for restatement include: *or, that is to say, in other words, i.e. or that is.*

Example: *X-ray therapy*, that is, treatment by use of x ray, often stops the growth of a tumour.

The phrase (*that is*) signals a clarification of previously used word.

Example 2: The surface of Africa consists mainly of *plateaus*, or large flat areas, although these occur at different levels.

The unfamiliar word is *plateaus*, and the signal word is *or* and the meaning is large flat areas.

6) Examples

Examples generally help readers get the meaning of new words because they illustrate the use of the word. Some key words include: *such as, like, for example, for instance, is / are.*

Example: Use *navigation buttons*, such as, the “Next” button, the “Previous” button, the “menu” button, and the “Exit” button, to go back and forth or jump to other topics while you are using your English software.

In the above example, the term *such as* indicates that what comes after is an explanation of the word *navigation buttons*.

7) Punctuation

Readers can use punctuation clues to infer the meaning of unknown words such as quotation marks (showing that the word has a special meaning), dashes (apposition), parentheses or brackets (enclosing a definition), and italics (showing that the word will be defined), commas, semicolons, or colons.

Example1: Full-colour pictures are printed using only black and three colours: yellow, cyan (a light blue) and magenta (a light purple).

The phrase *light blue* in parenthesis is an explanation of the word *cyan* and the same thing is true for the term *light purple* which explains the word *magenta*.

Example 2: The use of computers to *handle text*, or word processing, was foreseen in the 1950's.

In this example, the unfamiliar word is *handle text* and the signal punctuation is the comma, thus, the meaning of *handle text = word processing*

8) Surrounding Words

Some times readers can not find any signal words or key words as stated above; therefore, they may look around the new words or unfamiliar

words and try to guess at them. In fact, the surrounding words may help to understand the new words better than the other cues.

Example 1: Children are too young to understand that swallowing gum can cause medical problems and so they shouldn't be allowed to chew it, doctors say.

Here, the unfamiliar words are swallowing and chew so; from the surrounding words we can guess their meaning.

Example 2: In Constantine on Saturday morning, most streets are very crowded, so students came to study late because they were trapped in traffic.

The same thing as in the example mentioned above, the unknown word trapped can be inferred from other words (very crowded).

3.3 Rationale for the GFC Strategy

The GFC strategy is one of the most important strategies used for inferring the meaning of unknown words. Its importance has been stressed by many researchers in the field of vocabulary teaching. Nuttall (1982: 70) argues for the use of this strategy because of the weaknesses in the other strategies as asking someone for the meaning of unknown words or using the dictionary. She mentions two main reasons in favour of this strategy: the possibility of understanding new words without asking about their meaning and the building of students' adoption of positive attitude to new

vocabulary items; that is, the possibility of inferring vocabulary meaning if they try instead of looking out in the dictionary or relying on others for explanation. Smith (1985: 94) adds that GFC is a strategy referred to whenever readers find unfamiliar words. The result of this is that they become no more dependent on others for learning vocabulary meaning.

Another researcher who advocates the GFC strategy is Dycus (1997, online pages) who says that guessing is intuitively appealing and offers many advantages over other vocabulary learning strategies. It also involves the skills of interpreting the surrounding text; predicting and checking prediction during reading. In addition to this, it replaces the use of the dictionary which has the disadvantage of interrupting the flow of reading. He also adds that this strategy is encouraged because of the enormous number of words in the English language and the number of words a reader needs to know to recognize a reasonably high percentage of words on the average written page.

Another argument for the use of the GFCs comes from Fengning (1994:39) and Ying (2000: 18) who mention that besides increasing students' vocabulary, this approach helps readers to learn words and to use them in context. It makes the reader know that the context determines the meaning of the words. In the same perspective, when readers refer to local and global contexts while looking for clues, they learn to direct their

attention to the text as a whole. Moreover, it encourages learners to develop the quality of risk-taking and makes them self-confident and independent when reading.

Alderson (2002: 347), too, stresses this importance by arguing that determining the meaning of unfamiliar words is much easier when they are presented in context, and that deriving their meaning is easier when the contextual information is closer to the target word. Thus, using context clues to infer or to guess the meaning of these words is an effective way to develop the reader's vocabulary which leads to better reading comprehension since reading comprehension ability and word knowledge are highly correlated (Carroll, 1993; in Cain *et al.*, 2004: 671).

To conclude with, we can say that the theories which support guessing word meaning from the context are based on the studies which indicate that word association enhances vocabulary, and words can be better recognized if they are taken in context than out of context. Those who advocate this strategy feel that traditional instructional methods of teaching vocabulary are time consuming and lengthy. Some believe that dictionary usage interrupts the flow of reading. Others feel that we can justify the use of the GFC strategy because of the great amount of words in the English language needed to be learned.

3.4 Aids and Impediments to GFC Strategy

In order to succeed in using the GFC strategy, there should be certain aids or conditions that facilitate the task for learners and make their guessing more successful. Nuttall (1982: 73) mentions some aids of them. They include the sufficient contextual clues around the target word and the lexical density of the text since texts with high lexical density are naturally difficult to handle.

Nation & Coady (1988: 104), too, put some principles that make guessing successful and practicable. The first of these conditions is the density which refers to the proportion of unknown to known words in a text. In this case, the higher the ratio of unknown words, the easier it is for the learner to interpret the unknown word. The second condition is the number of times the same unknown word occurs in the text and the various contexts in which it occurs. The third one is related to the importance of the unknown word for understanding the context in which it is found. The fourth condition is the degree of closeness of the contextual clue to the unknown word. The closer it is, the easier the guessing will be. Finally, the amount of the reader's previous knowledge about the topic read about helps a lot in facilitating the process of GFC. This is shown in the fact that readers who have greater background knowledge about a particular topic tend to have greater chance of having correct guesses.

Moreover, Nagy, 1991; in Nassaji (2004: 109) states that certain kinds of knowledge should be possessed by learners so that GFC is successful. They are summarized as follows:

- 1) Linguistic Knowledge which covers the knowledge already acquired by learners about the different linguistic contexts in which the unknown word has occurred. This includes syntactic knowledge, lexical knowledge, and knowledge of word schema (possible meanings of the word).
- 2) World knowledge which means the learners' understanding and use of the relevant domains of knowledge.
- 3) Strategic knowledge is the knowledge of the actual strategies learners use during the act of inferring the meaning of the unknown word from context.

Other factors that contribute to the success of the GFC strategy are stated by Wesche & Paribakht (2000: 197). For them, learners should have multiple exposures to words in varied discourse contexts. There should be also some clear textual cues to the meanings of unknown words. Besides, the reader's proficiency should be adequate to use the cues and the formal similarity of the new words to known words. In addition, readers should be able to know when and how to use contextual clues.

3.5 Training Students in the Use of the GFC Strategy

Training students to derive the meaning of unknown words using the contextual clues is helpful for their reading comprehension. This training is possible as it is mentioned by Van Parreren & Shouten-Van Parreren, 1981; in Read, 2000: 60). Many other researchers also suggest techniques for training readers in using this strategy.

Nuttall (1982: 72-73) gives a recipe of exercises for using the GFC strategy made of four steps:

First, the teacher supplies a short text or several short texts which contain the same nonsense word replacing the same FL word in the original version.

Second: It is method similar to the first kind except that instead of using nonsense words, the teacher uses real but unfamiliar FL words; that is, the teacher offers a choice of explanations/ definitions or L1 translations.

Third: The GFC strategy can be used with longer text where both the wider context and the immediate context that surround the target word are used to help learners to infer the meaning.

Other researchers as Clarke & Nation (1980; in Nation & Coady, 1988: 104-105), Readence (online pages), and Hunt & Begler (2005:18 online pages) suggest a procedure for training students in guessing word

meaning from context. In this procedure, students are advised to start with looking at the unknown word and decide its part of speech. Is it a noun, a verb, an adjective, or an adverb? Then, they look at the clause or the sentence containing the unknown word. If the unknown word is a noun, what are the adjectives that describe it? What verb is it near? That is, what does the noun do and what is done to it? If the unknown word is a verb, what noun does it go with? Is it modified by an adverb? If the unknown word is an adjective, what noun does it modify? If the unknown word is an adverb, what verb does it modify? After that, they look at the relationship between the clause or sentence containing the unknown word and other sentences or paragraphs. This relationship is sometimes signalled by a conjunction like: *but, because, if* or *when*, or by an adverb like: *however, or as a result*. In other cases, there is no signal word at all. Next, students use the knowledge they have gained from step 1-3 to guess the meaning of the word. Finally, they check that their guess is correct. They see that the part of speech of their guess is the same as the part of speech of the unknown word. If it is not the same, then something is wrong with their guess. So, they replace the unknown word with their guess. If the sentence makes sense, their guess is probably correct. They break the unknown word into its prefix, root, and suffix, if possible. If the meanings of the prefix and root correspond to their guess, this is fine. If not, they look at their guess again, but they do not change any thing, if they feel reasonably

certain about their guess using the context. So, in order to reduce the probability of erroneous guesses, learners should confirm their inferences by consulting a dictionary (Scholfield, 1997; in Hunt & Begler, 2005: 18 online pages) or they may ask the teacher.

3.6 Elaborating Inferencing Tests

In order to evaluate how successful the use of the GFC strategy is, and to assess learners on their ability to make inferences about unknown words, there should be certain tests for this purpose.

Read, (2000: 62-63) suggests two types of tests that may be administered to students. The first of these tests involves the selection of a certain number of words that the teacher thinks they are unknown to the learners and then introduces them in sentences or paragraphs. Here, the teacher can control the amount and kind of contextual clues provided, but at risk of having contexts that are unnatural and that learners are not going to encounter in real reading. In the second type we replace target words with nonsense words. This means that the learners will not use any morphological clues but rely only on the contextual information available.

According to Frantzen (2003), one of the advantages of using nonsense words is that it makes sure that the participants will not have prior knowledge of the meaning of target words. However, the

disadvantage is that it excludes the use of morphology of the word to help derive its meaning. Another disadvantage is that certain participants may learn these nonsense words during the study. Consequently these words may become part of their vocabulary (2000: 169).

3.7 Advantages of the GFC Strategy

The GFC strategy provides many advantages to learners and readers of foreign languages. Fengning (1994: 31) & Ying (2000: 18) mention that in addition to enlarging students' vocabulary, it helps them not only to derive word meaning but also know how to use these words in other contexts. GFC makes the reader aware of the fact that context determines the meaning of words. This approach enables readers to cope with vocabulary problems independently and makes them more confident while handling texts. Moreover, readers would concentrate more and more on the whole text since the meaning of a new word may be derived from a more general context found in group of sentences, a paragraph, or even the whole text. Another support of the GFC strategy comes from the enormous number of words in English language which is difficult to be known by a learner using other strategies; thus, guessing is considered as the only reasonable way to learn enough words. This gives them a powerful aid to comprehension and speed up their reading (Dycus, 1997 on-line pages).

3.8 Shortcomings of the GFC Strategy

Despite the important role of the GFC strategy in deriving vocabulary meaning as discussed above, many other researchers have criticized it and showed its weaknesses or shortcomings. One of the researchers who have studied this strategy is Laufer (1997: 28-30). She has found that there are certain factors which interfere in the guessing attempts of the reader and make them difficult. She has insisted on the fact that there are certain words that can not be guessed because of one or many of the following factors:

The first factor concerns the non existent contextual clues. For her, Contextual clues are not always available around the unknown word. She argues with the findings of Kelly that:

Unless the context is very constrained, which is a relatively rare occurrence, or unless there is a relationship with a known word identifiable on the basis form and supported by context, there is little chance of guessing the correct meaning (Kelly, 1990; in Laufer, 1997: 28).

The same idea is also supported by Bensousan and Laufer (1984; in Laufer 1997: 28). They say that in a passage of academic prose, out of seventy words that the learners are supposed to guess, clear contextual clues are found only for thirteen words. So, the availability of contextual clues is not always certain.

The second factor is the unusable contextual clues. In some cases, even the contextual clues exist in the reading text, they can not be used by the learners because they occur in words that are themselves unfamiliar to the reader. This familiarity with words is important for successful guessing to take place. Researchers mention that this successful guessing requires coverage of 95 to 98% of familiar words. That is why, it is important for guessing that the density of known to unknown words should be high.

The third problem is misleading and partial clues. There are words that seem to be composed of meaningful parts or clues, but these clues are misleading. This is particularly apparent in morphological clues. Let us consider the example taken by Laufer (1997: 25). The word 'infallible' looks as if it is composed of the prefix 'in', the stem 'fall', and the suffix 'ible' and it thus means something that can not fall which is not the case. Another example is the word 'short comings' which looks like a compound of 'short' and 'comings' meaning 'short visits' which is very far from its real meaning.

The last factor that contributes to successful guessing is the reader's background knowledge of the subject of the text read. A reader whose background knowledge is different from the author's one or a reader who has no knowledge about what he is reading is quite unable to use the GFC strategy.

Other researchers who have highlighted the shortcomings of the GFC strategy are Wesche and Paribakht (2000: 197). They mention that there are many unknown words which are simply ignored, and any trial to derive their meaning from their context is unsuccessful. In addition, Nation & Coady (1988: 103) report that even if learners succeed in guessing the correct meaning of the unknown word, it is not certain that they acquire this new word. This is mainly due to the fact that this meaning is needed only for the specific time when the student is reading.

Conclusion

To end with, we can say that the GFC strategy is one of the most widely encouraged strategies used in dealing with encountered unknown words while reading. This strategy is based on using available contextual clues and the background knowledge of the reader. It is common with all readers whatever their level of proficiency is since it is more preferred than other vocabulary strategies. However, in some cases, it is hindered by certain factors among which the high percentage of familiar words that should be covered by a particular reader to be successful in using it.

All in all, despite these impediments, the GFC strategy is still advocated by readers who need training in its use to improve their ability in guessing vocabulary

Chapter IV

The Experimental work

Introduction

This study describes the use of the GFC strategy to derive the meaning of unknown vocabulary items encountered while reading in EFL. The aim of this study is to see whether training students in using the strategy improves their ability to infer vocabulary meaning from context or not. The procedure of this experimental work goes through three main stages: the pre-test stage where the participants are tested in their ability of inferring vocabulary meaning from context; the treatment stage which is devoted to the training of the subjects in using the different contextual clues to guess the meaning of unknown words; finally, the post-test stage where the participants' guessings at the meaning of target words are evaluated. The results of this innovative treatment are compared with other scores or research works done by other researchers, mainly the works of Ames (1966), Liu and Nation (1984), Nation and Coady (1988).

4.1 The Method

The data examined in the present study are collected in a class experiment on guessing vocabulary meaning using contextual clues. The

aim is to investigate the value of training students in the use of the GFC strategy to infer the meaning of unfamiliar words during reading.

4.2 Participants

The participants in our study are 25 first-year LMD students of English at the University of Mentouri in Constantine during the academic year 2005-2006. These students belong to one of the groups the researcher is teaching. After the administration of the pre-test, two students are excluded because they are third year students in the department of translation at the same time. Three other students are excluded because they are absent during the training stage. So, it becomes impossible to administer a post-test for them. There remain twenty students (15 female students and 5 male ones). These students come from different regions and belong to the same age group; that is, from eighteen to twenty. In addition, most of them have been studying English as a foreign language for, at least, more than five years.

4.3 Overview of the Procedure

To put into practice the theoretical review of the literature discussed in the previous chapters, we have employed a pre-experimental design consisting of one single group pre-test / post-test. This design is used because the duration of the study is too short (seven weeks) and it is

one of the easiest designs to implement. It has also the advantage of creating the least disruption to a course.

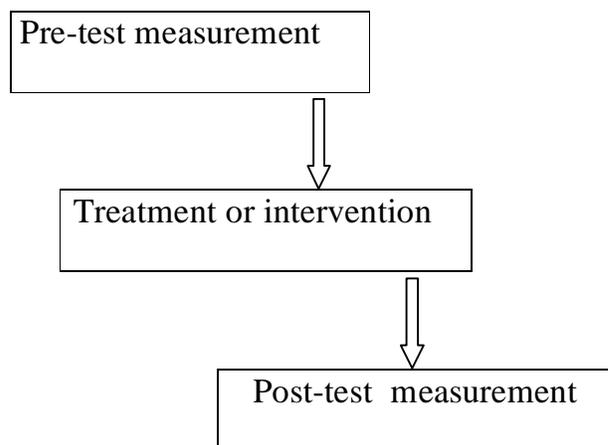
A Pre-experimental design is designed where there is no control group and is diagrammed as follows:

Diagram 3 Pre-experimental Research Design

$O_1 \quad X \quad O_2$

O_1 stands for the pre-test or the first observation, X stands for the treatment or the intervention, and O_2 is the post-test or the second observation. So, in this kind of design, a single case is observed at two points: One before the treatment or the intervention and one after. Changes in the outcome are presumed to be the result of the intervention. The steps of the procedures followed are shown in diagram 4.

Diagram 4 Overview of Procedures



The first step is a pre-test where the subjects are tested about their level in using the GFC strategy. The aim of this pre-test is to determine what inferencing level students have before being trained.

The second step is a set of training courses in using the GFC strategy where subjects are supposed to be introduced to the different kinds of contextual clues and more practice of these clues while using the strategy

The third step is a post-test administered to students after they have finished their training period. Both the pre-test and the post-test are similar in form, instructions and the number of target lexical items. It is worth mentioning that the pre-test, the post-test and the majority of the training exercises are taken from Baudoin *et al.*, (1997); a course book intended for teaching the use of context clues for guessing vocabulary meaning.

4.3.1 The Pre-test Procedure

In the pre-test, participants are informed that the test is part of the research work the researcher is conducting and that it would not be used as part of their course grade, but they are asked to do it as carefully as possible as if they are sitting for an official exam. They are not informed

of the nature of the study until after all the elements have been collected so as not to affect the results inappropriately.

The pre-test itself (see appendix A) as mentioned above is taken from Baudoin *et al.*, (1997: 128-131). It is composed of a text that the participants are supposed to read silently with a list of ten vocabulary items that they try to guess at their meanings. Before setting the task for the students, we have given them an explanation of what to do and provided them with an ample. The task is to read the text and give a synonym, a definition or a description of each of the italicised vocabulary items in the space provided. They are given the paragraph number and the line number.

The analysis of the words suggested for inferring show that most subjects do not know their meaning, but these words occur frequently enough or in a rich enough context. This is done to facilitate the use of the GFC strategy. There are 10 target words which are taken into consideration. The time allocated for the test is 45 minutes. The scale for evaluating the degree of success in lexical inferencing is a three-point scale (0 to 1: one point is allocated for successful inferences which are semantically, syntactically and contextually appropriate. Half a point is given to the responses that are semantically appropriate but syntactically incorrect, or vice versa. The same is the case when two answers are

supplied; one correct and the other wrong. If the responses do not meet any of the above conditions, it is considered unsuccessful, and no point is allocated. All the answers are evaluated by the researcher himself. The total number of responses to all target words is 200 since we have 10 target words and 20 participants in either the pre-test or the post-test.

4.3.2 Analysis of the Pre-Test Results

From table 3 below, we notice that the average number of correctly guessed words is 3.4 out of 10 words; that is, a percentage of 34%. As it will be seen later in the discussion, this rate of success is far away lower than the average rate achieved by other subjects in works done by other researchers as mentioned in the introduction. The participants' rate of success varies from only one correctly guessed word to six correctly guessed words. In terms of percentage, they are between 10% and 60%. A final remark about the scores of the pre-test is that the group of participants is heterogeneous since there is a wide gap between the lowest score and the highest one.

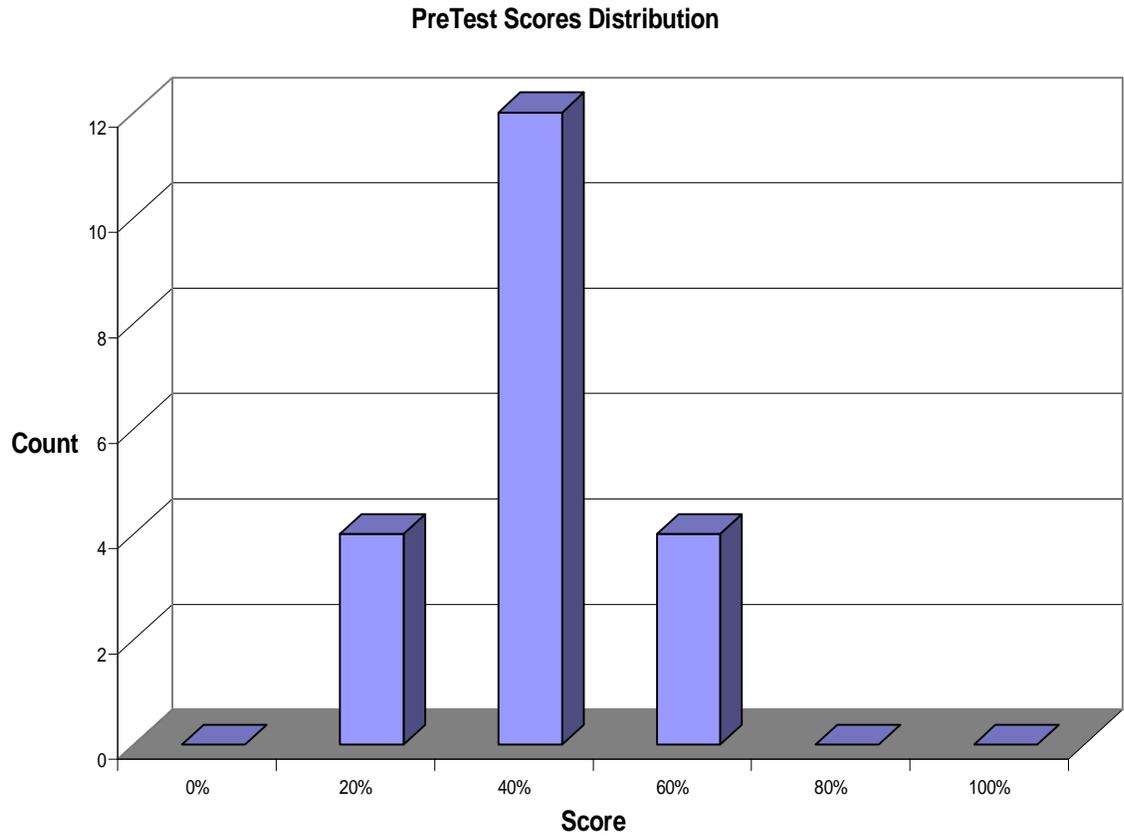
Taking the pre-test scores distributions into account as mentioned in figure 1 below, we find that there are three categories: The first category represents one fifth of the sample studied, and they have 20% correct guesses. The second category which is similar to the first one in

terms of number has reached the stage of 60% of correct guesses. The largest group is the one which has scored about 40%. In this case, we have 12 participants.

Table 3 Number and Percentage of Correct Guesses in the Pre-test

Participants	Correctly Guessed Words	% Correctly Guessed Words
1	2	20%
2	3	30%
3	4	40%
4	3	30%
5	3	30%
6	6	60%
7	6	60%
8	3	30%
9	5	50%
10	5	50%
11	3	30%
12	3	30%
13	2	20%
14	4	40%
15	3	30%
16	1	10%
17	4	40%
18	3	30%
19	1	10%
20	4	40%
Mean	3.4	34%

Figure 1 Pre-test Scores Distribution



4.3.3 The Treatment Procedure

The treatment sessions are given to subjects as extra sessions not included in the official time table, so subjects who have attended the treatment are volunteers. This treatment period takes five weeks: each week they have a session of one hour and a half.

At the beginning of the training stage, the participants are introduced to the different signal words or indicators which help them

locate contextual clues. The teacher draws their attention to these signal words whenever they occur. The list of signal words with examples is mentioned in 3.2.

The second step in the training procedure is to explain to the students how important the context is to derive the meaning of the words they do not know. At this point, a clear distinction is made between local context and global context which are important to subjects for guessing at the meaning of unknown words. Both types are introduced and practised by participants. Then, they start practising the use of the GFC strategy in the procedure suggested by Clarke and Nation, 1980; in Nation and Coady (1988: 104-105).

The teacher uses first isolated sentences where the students focus on the immediate context (for more details see appendix B). This training work lasts three weeks. Some of the suggested exercises are taken from Baudoin *et al.*, (1997: 3 and 5) and others are adapted and prepared by the researcher himself. In each exercise, the students are supposed to give a definition, a description or a synonym of a certain number of unknown words using the available contextual clues. Each time they are asked to find the signal words and the type of clue that help them to derive the meaning of the target words. Here, the aim is to make the participants

aware of the context clues they are using and to make sure that their guesses are not accidental but intentional.

After this stage, the participants are exposed to longer texts where they use both the immediate and the wider contexts and their background knowledge. At this level, the participants have two training sessions where they are supposed to read two texts and try to derive the meaning of unknown words using available contextual clues. The same as in the case of the previous exercises, the texts and the related exercises are taken from Baudoin *et al.* (1997: 75, 143). However, there are certain adaptations in the choice of the supposed unknown words.

4.3.4 The Post-test Procedure

The post-test is set after the training period is ended. It aims at assessing the subjects' improvement in guessing vocabulary meaning using contextual cues. As in the case of the pre-test, the same scale of evaluating the degree of success in lexical inferencing is used. The text's size and the number of target vocabulary items are also the same. The text is also taken from Baudoin *et al.*, 1997: 208-210 (see appendix D). The test takes 45 minutes, the instructions are mentioned on the test sheet, but this time no explanation is given because the students are now familiar with this type of questions.

4.3.5 Analysis of Post-test Results

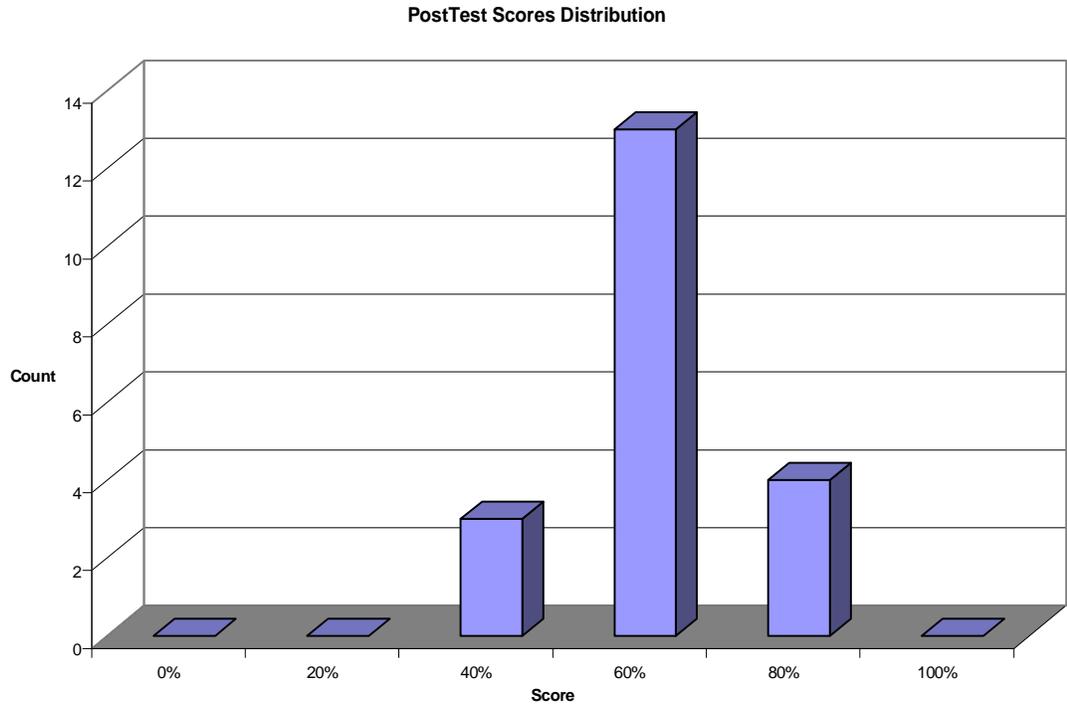
In the post-test, the participants' scores have witnessed great changes globally and individually. In table number 4 below, we notice that the mean of correct guesses has reached 5.425 which give a percentage of 54.25%. This rate of success is still below the average reached by participants in other research works, but the progress is quite clear. The lowest score achieved by the participants is 4 correctly guessed words; that is, 40% and the highest score is 8 correctly guessed words which is a percentage of 80%.

To analyze these scores in terms of categories (see figure 2), we find that there are three main groups or categories. The first category has the score of 40% of correct guess and includes three participants. The second category which is quite similar to the first one in terms of the number of participants included has the score of 80%. The third category is the average one where we find about 13 participants who have reached the score of 60% of correct guesses.

Table 4 Number and Percentage of Correctly Guessed Words in the Posttest

Participants	Number of Correctly Guessed Words	Percentage of Correctly Guessed Words
1	4	40%
2	6	60%
3	5	50%
4	5	50%
5	5	50%
6	7.5	75%
7	8	80%
8	7	70%
9	5	50%
10	5	50%
11	5	50%
12	7	70%
13	5	50%
14	5	50%
15	5	50%
16	4	40%
17	6	60%
18	5	50%
19	4	40%
20	5	50%
Mean	5.425	54.25%

Figure 2 Post-test Scores Distribution

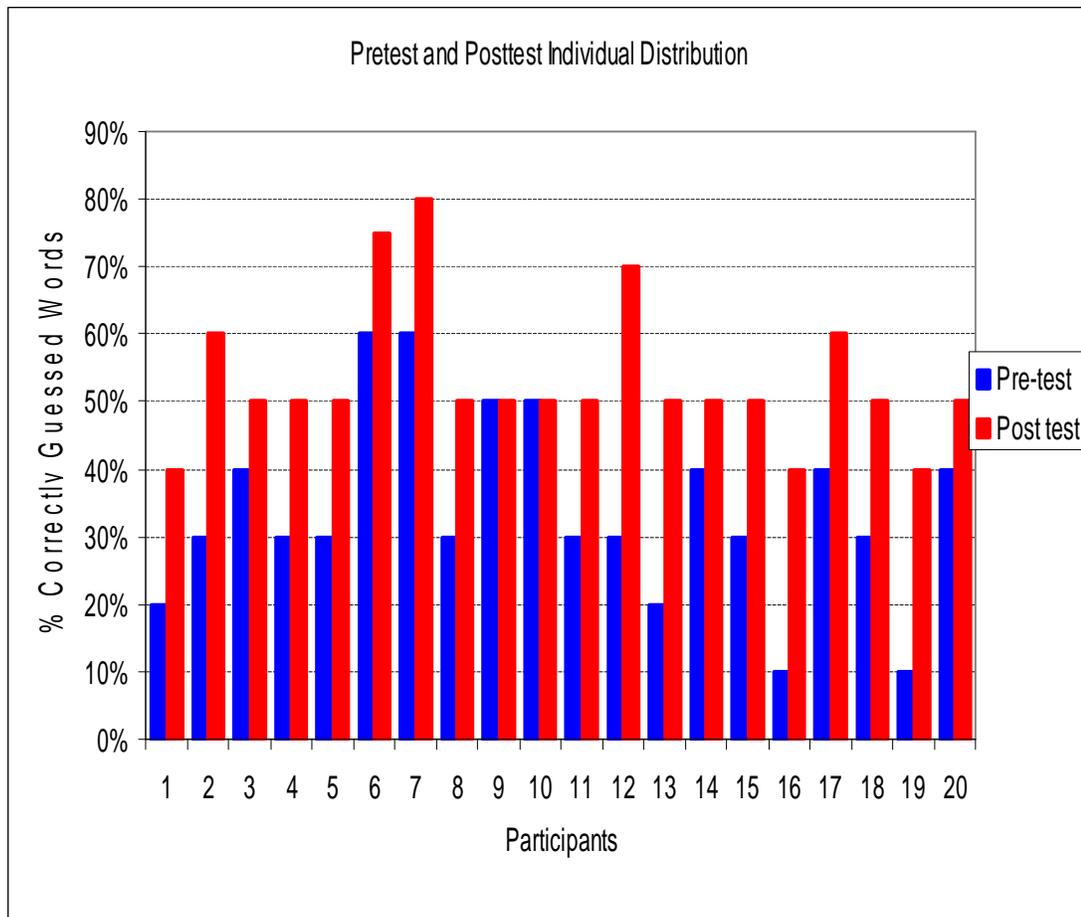


4.4 Results and Discussions

Table 3 shows the degree at which the students are able to infer the meaning of the target words which are given in the pre-test. Out of the suggested ten words, the participants have successfully inferred 3.4 words which give a percentage of 34% of the unknown words they are supposed to infer. The participants' scores vary from 1 to 6 correctly guessed words; that is, from 10% to 60%.

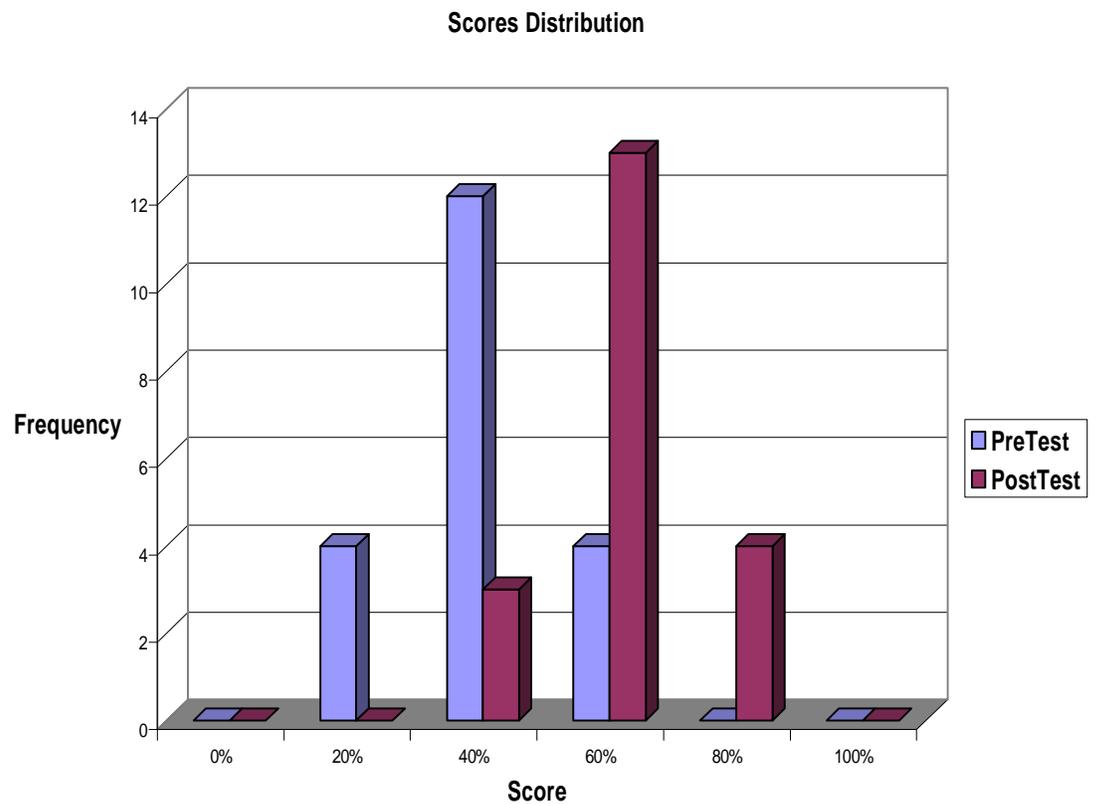
After the treatment or the training stage and the different tasks undertaken with the participants, a post-test is delivered. From the scores of this test (see table 4), we notice a remarkable change in the subjects' success in guessing unknown words correctly. The mean of correctly guessed words in the pre-test is 3.4 or 34%. In the post-test, this mean has risen to 5.4; that is, 54.25%. This progress of more than 20% is due to the training of students in using the GFC strategy.

Figure 3 Individual Scores in the Pretest and the Posttest



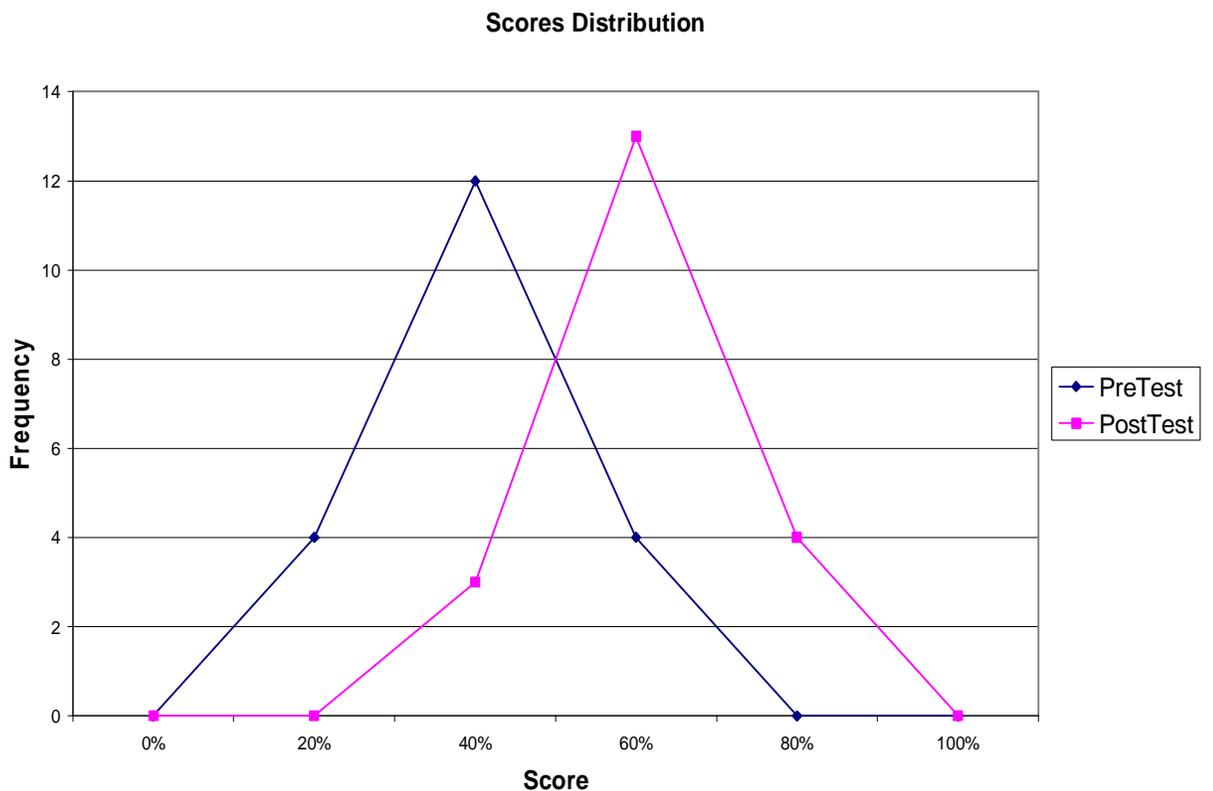
If we take individual subjects into consideration, we see that the poorest score in the pre-test is only one correctly guessed word out of 10 words. This score has skyrocketed to 4 words out of 10. The same thing happens to the best score in the pre-test which was 6 correctly guessed words and has risen to 8 words out of 10 (for more details see figure 3 below).

Figure 4 Global Scores Distribution in the Pretest and the Posttest



The general scores distribution of both the pre-test and the post-test (figures 4 and 5) shows the great difference in the participants' rate of success in giving correct guesses. As discussed previously, the category which includes a large number of participants (12 participants) in the pre-test is the one where the percentage is 40%. However, in the post-test, the mean category includes 13 participants and has a percentage of success of 60%.

Figure 5 Pre-test and Posttest Scores Distribution



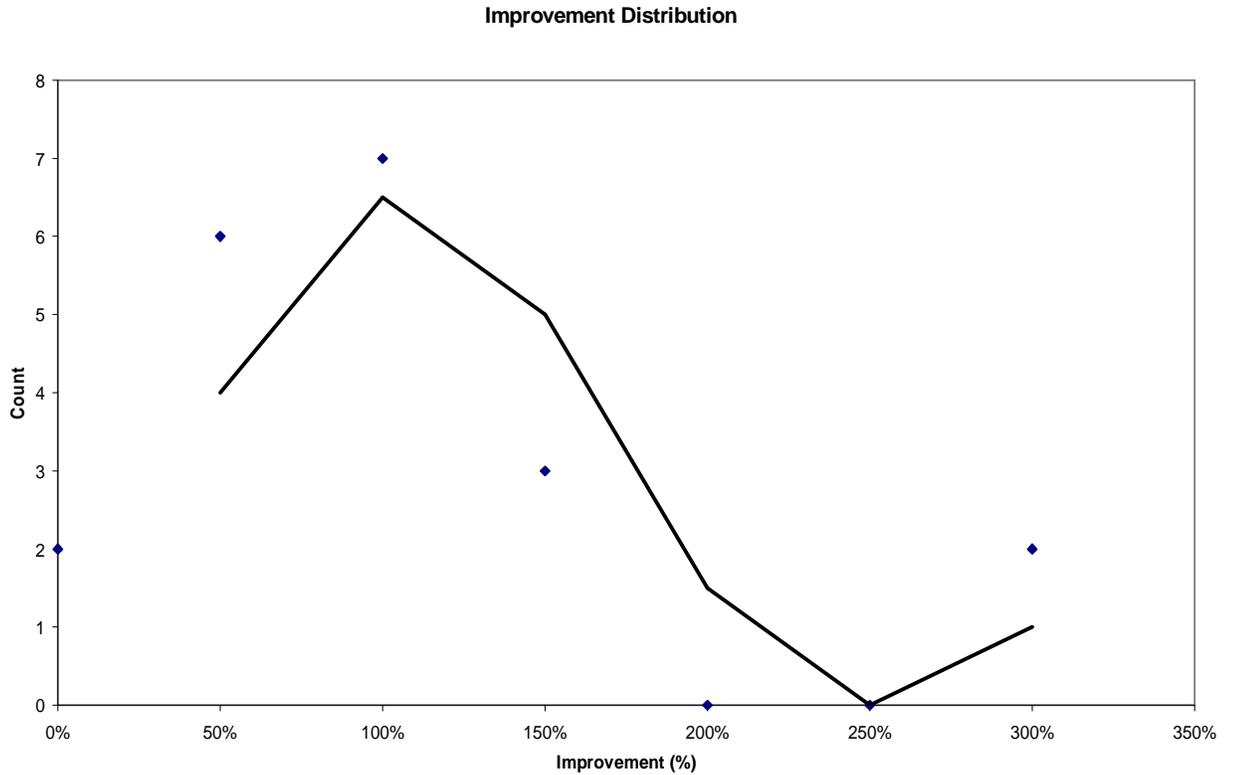
4.4.1 Participants' Improvement in Correctly Guessing Vocabulary Meaning

Taking the different scores collected from both the pre-test and the post-test into consideration, we come to the conclusion that a remarkable improvement has taken place. If we take table 4 and figure 6 in consideration, we can see that the mean of the rate of improvement of all the participants is estimated at 2.025 correctly guessed words; that is, a percentage of about 20%. However, individual participants have varying levels of improvement. About seven participants (one third of the population studied) have 100% improvement, six participants have 50% improvement, three have 150% improvement and two have 300% improvement but two participants have 0% improvement. Those are students who have scored five correctly guessed words in both the pre-test and the post-test.

Table 5 Participants' Improvement

Participants	Improvement	Pct Improvement
1	2	100%
2	3	100%
3	1	25%
4	2	67%
5	2	67%
6	1.5	25%
7	2	33%
8	4	133%
9	0	0%
10	0	0%
11	2	67%
12	4	133%
13	3	150%
14	1	25%
15	2	67%
16	3	300%
17	2	50%
18	2	67%
19	3	300%
20	1	25%
Mean	2.025	20%

Figure 6 Improvement Distribution



Conclusion

In this chapter, we have conducted an experiment where our participants are pre-tested in using the GFC strategy, and then they have gone through a series of training work or treatment. Finally, these participants are post-tested as similar as possible to the pre-test. In the analysis of the different scores, we notice that there is considerable improvement in correctly guessing unknown words using contextual clues on the part of participants. This improvement or gain in the skill of

guessing is due to the training work the subjects have undertaken. This is shown in the comparison of the pretest and the posttest scores. The average rate of improvement which is estimated at 20% varies from one participant to another. There are participants who have 100% rate of improvement and others who have reached a rate of 300%. However, there are certain participants who have no improvement at all. This is due to the fact that both participants have got a number of correctly guessed words equal to the average; that is, 5 words.

Chapter V

Pedagogical Implications

Introduction

In this chapter, we will discuss the different conclusions that can be drawn from our study and their comparison with the findings of other works conducted by other researchers. We will also present the various pedagogical implications these findings may bring to the teaching of the GFC strategy while handling the problem of unknown vocabulary while reading in a foreign language. Finally, we will go through the various limitations of this study and the possible future research perspectives that may be carried out by other researchers.

5.1 Discussion of the Findings

The experiment conducted in our research work is set to determine whether the rate of success in inferring the meaning of unknown vocabulary items using different contextual clues can be improved or not. The data collected in the post-test show that there is a remarkable increase in the participants' degree of success. As compared to other studies on the GFC strategy such as: Ames, 1966 and Liu and Nation, 1984; in Nation

and Coady, 1988: 103, the subjects' rate of success in guessing is quite close to the rate recorded in our research work..

In Ames' study (1966), the subjects are doctoral-level students. The percentage of the words that are correctly inferred is 60%. This percentage varies from 85% to 100% in the Lui and Nation's study of 1984 (cited in Nation and Coady, 1988: 104). However, Nation and Coady estimate the learners' success in giving correct inferences between 60 to 80% (1988:104). Our participants' score is about 54.25% which is quite close to the percentage estimated by Nation and Coady as mentioned above. This difference may be due to the factors that will be mentioned in the limitation of study in 5.3.

Another conclusion that may be drawn from our work is that strategy training is possible and gives fruitful results as mentioned in the scores of the pre-test and the post-test. This conclusion strengthens the findings of Carnine *et al.* (1984; in Nation and Coady, 1988: 104) who proved that training learners in the GFC strategy gives improvement in their ability of guessing.

5.2 Pedagogical Implications

As it is mentioned previously, the scores of our study support the conclusions drawn by other researchers in the fact that training students in

the GFC strategy is possible. The aim of our research work is to determine whether training students in using the GFC strategy improves their rate of making correct guesses or not. The results are quite positive. Thus, the first implication is that teachers should be urged to teach their students how to use the context to infer the vocabulary meaning which facilitates reading comprehension. So, strategy training, as it is mentioned by Dycus (1997, online pages) is possible and it is useful to be taught because it encourages readers to make and test predictions, which is a very important reading skill. This testing and re-evaluation of guesses should be encouraged even when the students are certain of a word's meaning because most words have multiple meanings, and it is only the context that decides what meaning is intended to by a particular writer. Haynes (1993) points that "learning to re-evaluate initial guesses is as important as learning to make a first guess" (174).

Another implication of this study is that learners must have great deal of lexical knowledge in order to benefit from lexical inferencing. This implies that they must have an intensive exposure to language and learning vocabulary which is probably best done through all types of reading.

5.3 Limitations of the Study

Like any other study, the research work we have conducted has certain limitations. Some of these are related to the nature of the study

itself, others are due to the conditions under which the study is conducted. The first of these limitations is linked to the research design followed. Many pre-experimental designs as mentioned earlier are designs where there is no control group. In our study, the method used is the one-group pretest-posttest design. According to Campbell and Stanley (1963) and Huck and Cormier (1996, online pages), this approach has weaknesses.

The first of these weaknesses is the difficulty to assess the validity of the findings of these kinds of studies because they do not include any control or comparison group; thus, it is difficult to decide if the results are due to the treatment or to other variables (other things besides the treatment might have occurred between the pre-test and the post-test).

Other problems that may complicate the interpretation of the scores in a single group pre-test and post-test design are:

History: This is one of the uncontrolled variables since the changes between O^1 and O^2 may be due to events that possibly occurred in addition to the treatment X. In our case, the improvement in correctly guessing unknown vocabulary items may be due to the fact that the participants might have learnt about the GFC strategy with other teachers or alone during the period of the treatment.

Maturation: This is also a factor since subjects may improve because they mature or regress (physically or psychologically) between the pre-test and the post-test.

Testing: The final problem is related to the testing procedure itself. Participants can do better on the post-test as a result of taking the pre-test particularly if essential measures are used; therefore, they become aware of their deficits in the pre-test.

Another limitation in our study is the relatively small number of participants. We have selected a small sample because it is important to ensure that group members can be manageable and that the students receive greater individualized attention than they will in regular classroom. However, we think that the study that has included a larger number of students will have yielded findings that can be generalized to a greater number of students. In addition to this, relying only on the texts and the exercises in both the pre-test and the post-test suggested in Baudoin *et al.*, 1997 may have influenced the results. Despite the fact that this book appeals to L2 and FL learners and the exercises are specially designed to test the GFC strategy, having other texts about topics familiar to participants might have given different results. Another limitation is related to the fact that the researcher has used his own students as research subjects. This may create classroom dynamics that may be different if the

subjects are not familiar to the researcher. Thus, generalizing the findings is limited. Moreover, the time allocated to the training period or the treatment of the subjects is too short. We think that if the subjects are trained in using the GFC strategy for longer periods, their scores will be better than the actual ones since they will be introduced to more texts and more contextual clues.

5.4 Suggestions for Future Research

One area that may be subject to further investigation would be the use the GFC strategy with more advanced learners or beginners as researchers mention that beginners and advanced learners use better the GFC strategy (Dycus, 1997 on-line pages). So, it would be better if other researchers test our hypothesis with Algerian subjects of this level. Another area of further research is limiting the research work only to the immediate context or the wider context. We need to know how students react in each case and which one is more helpful to subjects. One other area for further investigation would be to determine the rate of success in learning vocabulary from context which is different from inferring the meaning of unknown words without acquiring them.

We also need to investigate the relationship between the different components of language proficiency and lexical inferencing. In this case,

the role of the size of vocabulary knowledge as compared to the depth of vocabulary knowledge in guessing word meaning from context should be an area of further research.

Finally, future research work can be carried out to compare the GFC strategy with other learner-centered strategies such as dictionary use. This comparison could include the rate of success in finding vocabulary meaning and acquiring these words at the same time.

Conclusion

In this study, we wanted to demonstrate that training students in using contextual clues for guessing at the meaning of unknown vocabulary items is possible. To reach this conclusion, we have gone through three main stages of the review of literature to pave the ground for the experimental work.

The first stage concerns the discussion of the notion of reading in general. We have presented reading from three different points of view: The traditional one focuses on the written material or the text, the cognitive view goes farther and involves the readers' prior knowledge in addition to the text, and the metacognitive view where the reader uses his or her prior knowledge of the topic and all the related information. We have also dealt with the different reading models; that is, the bottom-up model, the top-down model and the interactive model. In addition, we have discussed the various reading strategies employed by the readers in their struggle for achieving reading comprehension.

The second stage deals with reading and its relation with vocabulary. The aim of any reading is to get a message from a text or what we call comprehension. This comprehension is hindered by certain factors

or deficits. They include the word-level deficits, sentence-level deficits, discourse-level deficits, cognitive abilities, and the learners' prior knowledge. In addition, we have dealt with the vocabulary issue in general and the way teachers and learners face this issue in particular. In fact, two main methods or strategies have been identified. The first is teacher-centered strategies which include planned and unplanned vocabulary teaching. The second is learner-centered strategies. Here, the learners can use the technique of skipping or ignoring words, use various kinds of dictionaries, and use contextual clues to guess at the meaning of unknown vocabulary items or what we call the GFC strategy.

Training learners in using this strategy, as it is mentioned above, is the main part of our study. We have started with the definition of context and the different kinds of contextual clues that might help learners infer vocabulary meaning while reading. We have also discussed the theories which advocate the teaching of this strategy. Here, aids and impediments to the GFC strategy are discussed together with the different rates of success in giving correct guesses. Finally, a procedure for this training is suggested.

From the scores of the experimental work that we have conducted, we come to the conclusion that strategy training is possible and that a remarkable improvement in correctly guessing vocabulary meaning has

taken place. This is very clear from the comparison of the score of the pre-test and the post-test where we have an average rate of improvement of about 20%. In fact, this improvement level varies from one participant to another since there are learners who have a rate of improvement of 300% and others who have no improvement at all. This is mainly due to the level of participants.

In the end we think that this study sets light on one of the vocabulary strategies that have been neglected by both learners and teachers. Therefore, it is high time to give it attention since it makes learners more independent while struggling for the comprehension of vocabulary.

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Appendices

Appendix A

The Pre-test

Text: Conjugal Prep

The bridegroom, dressed in a blue blazer and brown suede Adidas sneakers, nervously cleared his throat when his bride, in traditional white, walked down the classroom aisle. As the mock minister led the students- and ten other couples in the room- through the familiar marriage ceremony, the giggles almost drowned him out. But it was no laughing matter. In the next semester, each “couple” would buy a house, have a baby- and get a divorce.

In a most unusual course at Parkrose (Ore.) Senior High School, social science teacher Cliff Allen leads his students through the trials and tribulations of married life. Instead of the traditional course, which dwells on the psychological and sexual adjustments young marrieds must face, Allen exposes his students to the nitty-gritty problems of housing, insurance and child care. “No one tells kids about financial problems,” says Allen, 36. “It’s like sex- you don’t talk about it in front of them”.

Students act out in nine weeks what normally takes couples ten years to accomplish. In the first week, one member of each couple is

required to get an after school job- a real one. During the semester, the salary, computed on full time basis with yearly increases factored in, serves as the guide line for their life style. The third week, the couples must locate an apartment they can afford and study the terms of the lease.

Disaster: In the fifth week, the couples “have a baby” and then compute the cost by totalling hospital and doctor bills, prenatal and postnatal care, baby clothes and furniture. In week eight, disaster strikes: marriages are strained to the breaking point by such calamities as a mother-in-law’s moving in, death, or imprisonment. It’s all over by week nine (the tenth year of marriage). After lectures by marriage counsellors and divorce lawyers and computations of alimony and child support, the students get divorced.

Allen’s course, which has “married” 1,200 students since its inception five years ago, is widely endorsed by parents and students. Some of the participants have found the experience chastening to their real-life marital plans. “Bride” Valerie Payne, 16, and her “groom”, David cooper, the course pointed out “the troubles you can have.” The course was more unsettling to Marianne Baldrice, 17, who tried “marriage” last term with her boyfriend Eric Zook, 18, “Eric and I used to get along pretty well before we took the course together,” Marianne said. “But I wanted to live in the city, he wanted the country. He wanted lots of kids, I wanted no

kids. It's been four weeks since the course ended and Eric and I are just starting to talk to each other again".

"Conjugal Prep," Newsweek. In Baudoin *et al.*, 1997: 128-131

Exercise:

Both the ideas and the vocabulary from the passage below are taken from conjugal Prep." Use the context provided to determine the meanings of the italicized words. Write a definition, a synonym, or description of each the italicized items in the space provided.

In Mr. Allen's high school class, all the students have to "get married." However the wedding ceremonies are not real

1..... ones but imitations. These mock ceremonies sometimes

2..... become so noisy that the loud laughter drowns out the voice of the minister." Even the two students getting married

3..... often begin to giggle. The teacher, Mr. Allen, believes that marriage is difficult and serious business. He wants young people to understand that there are many changes that must take place after marriage. He believes that the need for these

4..... psychological and financial adjustments should be understood before people marry.

Mr. Allen doesn't only introduce his students to major problems faced in marriage such as illness or unemployment

5. He also exposes them to nitty-gritty problems they will face

6..... every day. He wants to introduce young people to all the

7..... trails and tribulations that can strain a marriage to the breaking point. He even familiarizes his students with the problems of divorce and the fact that divorced men must pay child support money for their children and some times

8 pay monthly alimony to their wives.

9..... It has been unsettling for some of the students to see the problems that a married couple often faces. Until they took the course, they had not worried much about the problems of marriage. However, both students and parents feel that

10..... Mr. Allen's course is valuable and has endorsed the course publicly. Their statements and letters supporting the class have convinced the school to offer the course again.

Appendix B

Training Task 1

In the following sentences try to guess the meaning of the italicized word using context clues. Read each sentence carefully and write a definition, synonym, or description of this word on the line provided and name the kind of context used.

Meaning	Kind of context
1-I removed the from the shelf and began to read.
2-Harvey is a thief; he would .....the gold from his mother's teeth and not feel guilty.
3-Our uncle was a, an incurable wanderer who never could stay in one place.
4-Unlike his brother, who is truly a handsome person, Hogarty is quite.....
5-The Asian, like other apes, is specially adapted for life in trees
6-But surely every one knows that if you step on an egg, it will.....
7-Tom got a new .....for his birthday. It is a

sports model, red, with white interior and bucket seats.

8-In Constantine on Saturday morning, most streets are very crowded, so I came to work late because I was.....
in traffic.

9- is a rise in the general level of prices
you pay for things you buy.

10- The plane is scheduled to leave for Algiers at 7:00
but its departure has been.....for two hours.
That is to say, it will leave at 9:00 instead.

Baudoin *et al.*, 1997:3

Training task 2

In the following sentences try to guess the meaning of the italicized word using context clues. Read each sentence carefully and write a definition, synonym, or description of this word on the line provided and name the kind of context used.

Meaning	Kind of context	Sentence
1-.....	We watched as the cat came quietly through the grass toward the bird . When it was just a few feet from the victim, it gathered its legs under itself and <i>pounced</i> .
2-.....	In spite of the fact that the beautiful egret is in danger of dying out completely, many manufacturers still offer handsome prices for their long, elegant tail feathers, which are used as decoration on ladies' hats.
3-.....	The snake <i>slithered</i> through the grass. The man thought that the children were defenceless. So he walked boldly up to the oldest and demanded money. Imagine his
4-.....	surprise when they began to <i>pelt</i> him with rocks

- 5-..... Experts in kinesics, n their study of body motion as related to speech, hope to discover new methods of communication.
- 6-..... Unlike her gregarious sister, Jane is a shy, unsociable person who does not like to go to parties or to make new friends.
- 7-..... -After a day of hunting, Harold is ravenous. Yesterday, for example, he ate two bowls of soup, salad, a large chicken, and a piece of chocolate cake before he was finally satisfied.
- 8-..... After the accident, the ship went down so fast that we weren't able to salvage any of our personal belongings.

Baudoin *et al.*, 1997: 5

Training Task 3

Give a definition, a description or a synonym of the underlined words in the following sentences and choose the correct contextual clue that helped you to do so from the following clues: similarity, alternative, punctuation, example, morphology, reference words, definition, synonym, restatement, and surrounding words.

Lexical items	Meaning	Context
<p>1-The ancient <u>mammoth</u>, like other elephants is huge.</p>
<p>2-<u>Sedentary</u> individuals, people who are not very active, often have diminished health.</p>
<p>3- We had never seen such a large cave: It was simply <u>enormous</u>.</p>
<p>4-In our cities, most streets are very crowded, so I came late because I was <u>trapped</u> in traffic.</p>
<p>5- Al the <u>furniture</u> had been completely removed so that not a single table or a chair was to be seen.</p>
<p>6- The surface o Africa consists mainly of <u>plateaus</u>, or large flat areas, although</p>

these occur at different levels.

- 7- Full colour pictures are printed using only black and three colours: yellow, cyan (a light blue) and *magenta* (a light purple)
- 8-*X ray therapy*, that is, treatment by use of X ray often stops the growth of tumour.
- 9-*Malnutrition* gave him the shallowest of chests and thinnest of limbs. It stunted his growth.
- 10-The government *imposed* a heavy tax on people to pay for social services.

Adapted by the researcher

Training task 4

Read the following text

American Values in Education

1 Our school system has developed as it has because the American people value education highly. Some of the traditional values which have developed over the years are:

2 -Public education should be **free**. There should be no hidden charges to prevent any citizen from receiving a good education at public expense.

3 -Schooling should be equal and open to all. No one should be discriminated against because of race, religion, or financial status.

4 -The public schools should be free of any **creed** or religion. The schools of United States are open to all Americans regardless of their religious beliefs. The Supreme Court has held that no special prayer or Bible reading shall be required. However, religious schools (some called **parochial** schools) are permitted outside of the public school system.

5 -Public schools are controlled by the state and local government within which they are located. Local school boards **run** the public schools under laws passed by the state legislature. The State Board of Education **assists** the local schools, but does not give any orders to the district board. The United States Office of Education also assists with advice and information, but the actual control is located in the local school district, where the people know the local situation.

6 - **Attendance** at school is **compulsory**. Parents cannot decide to keep their children out of school. Each state compels the attendance of young people, usually between the age of 7 and 16.

7 -Schooling should be **enriched** and not just confined to the fundamentals. Most American believes that schools should be places where young people can **grow** in body, mind, and spirit. **Athletics**, clubs, social events, and creative arts are a part of each person's education. Schools should be lively places where individuals are encouraged to develop their greatest potential.

Baudoin *et al.*, 1997: 75

Exercise: Give a synonym, a definition, or a description of the following words taken from the text and identify the contextual that helped you find this meaning

Paragraph number	Lexical item	Meaning	Contextual clue
2	Free	.....	.....
4	Creed	.....	.....
.....	Parochial	.....	.....
5	Run	.....	.....
.....	Assists	.....	.....
6	Attendance	.....	.....
.....	Compulsory	.....	.....
7	Enriched	.....	.....
.....	Athletics	.....	.....
.....	grow	.....	.....

Training Task 5

Babies sound off: the power of babble

There is more to the babbling of a baby than meets the ear. A *handful* of scientists are picking apart infant's utterances and finding that not only is there an ordered sequence of vocal stages between birth and the first words, but in *hearing-impaired* babies a type of babbling thought to signal an emerging capacity for speech is delayed and distorted.

“The traditional wisdom [among developmental researchers] is that *deaf* babies babble like hearing babies”, says linguist D. Kimbrough Oller of the University of Miami (Fla). “This idea is a myth.” Oller reported his latest findings on hearing and deaf infants last week at a National Institutes of Health seminar in Bethesda, Md. He and his colleagues demonstrated 8 years ago that hearing babies from a variety of language communities start out by cooing and gurgling; at about 7 months of age, they start to produce *sequences* of the same syllables (for instance, “da-da-da” or “dut-dut-dut”) that are classified as babbling and can be recorded and acoustically measured in the laboratory, with wordlike sounds appearing soon after 1 year of age. *Babbling*-the emitting of identifiable consonant and vowel sounds-usually disappears by around 18 to 20 months of age.

In a just-completed study, Oller and his *co-workers* found that repeated sequences of syllables first appeared among 21 hearing infants between the ages of 6 and 10 months; in contrast, these vocalizations

emerged among 9 severely to profoundly deaf babies between the ages of 11 and 25 months. In addition, deaf babies babbled less frequently than hearing babies, produced fewer syllables and were more likely to use single syllable than repeated sequences.

Boudoin *et al.*, 1997:143

Exercise:

Use your general knowledge along with information from the entire text to write a definition, synonym, or a description of the italicized words:

Vocabulary items	Meaning
-handful:
-hearing-impaired
-deaf:
-sequence:
-babbling:
-co-worker
-emerged:

Appendix C

Post-test

"Happy Customers Matter of Honor among Japanese"

By John Burges
The Washington Post

In an age when personal service as a significant aspect of merchandising is dying out in the United States, Japan clings tenaciously to it.

Service is viewed by people in Japan not as a luxury, but as an essential ingredient for the success of individual companies and the Japanese economy as a whole.

Americans who move to Japan never get used to the range of services and courtesies taken for granted here. To those old enough to remember how things used to be at home, life can bring on twinges of nostalgia.

Supermarket check-out counters have two or three people ringing up and bagging groceries. Some stores deliver, with each bag arriving neatly stapled closed. Dry ice is inserted alongside the frozen foods to ensure that they don't spoil on the way.

Television shops normally send a technician to install and fine-tune a newly purchased set. The technician will rush back if anything goes wrong. Car salespeople are known to bring new models around to customers 'home

for test drives and loaners are available for people whose cars are in for repairs.

There are no limits to what is home-delivered -video movies, dry cleaning , health foods, rented tailcoats (this last one requires two visits from the sales staff, first for a lifting, second for delivery of the altered and freshly pressed garment).Office deliveries are common , too, especially of lunch.

Japanese barbers often give back massages as part of an ordinary haircut. If they remove a customer's eyeglasses, they may polish the lenses before returning them.

Self-service gasoline has yet to make its appearance here in any significant way. At the minimum, attendants fill the tank and wipe the windshield. They often empty ashtrays and stop traffic to let the motorist back on the road.

Department stores seem to have twice, if not three times the floor staff of American ones. Many stores wrap everything they sell. Upscale customers don't have to come in at all-the goods are taken to their homes for display and selection.

Feudal Japan evolved tight rituals of personal service. Many survive in the traditional inns called *ryokan*. Proprietors bow when guests arrive and straighten the shoes they step out of. Welcoming tea and elaborate meals are brought to the rooms. Bedding is laid out and cleared

away in the morning. On departure, the bows may be held until a guest's car is out of sight.

But even in the modern businesses, the culture's attention to detail and doing things the "correct" way fit well into the service mentality. While Americans may find it demeaning to fuss over a customer, Japanese worry-that their shop will be laughed at if they don't.

Perhaps the darkest spot on personal service in Japan is how remarkably impersonal it can be. Everyone is treated exactly alike. Employee's cheery greetings and directions, in fact, are often memorized from a company manual. After a month's stay in a hotel, guests may find the staff still has no idea who they are.

Still, the Japanese view service as the glue that holds commercial relationships together. If the correct personal contact and follow-up come with the first sale, a second is sure to come. Market share and loyal customers are the first goal, not short-term profit. Service may cost but it helps ensure these more important objectives.

While Americans in need of something think of stores, Japanese often think of dealers, individuals who supply and advise over the years on product lines like sake, clothing and electronic equipment.

Memories of service may help a company weather hard times. If a computer firm drops behind in product quality or price, its customers will not abandon it en masse. They would feel treacherous doing so. After all,

didn't the company send a technician to the office a dozen times to answer questions on that little desk-top model? Expand that to national scale and you have a more stable, predictable economy and job market in the Japanese view.

Japanese officials often say one reason why many American companies do poorly in Japan is because people can't believe they will give good service. Even if an American machine tops a Japanese one in price and quality, the buyer will be suspicious. Will I have to phone Houston every time something goes wrong? He may wonder.

Service is plugged as being "free", but of course, is not. Each woman who wraps and each man who lugs groceries is part of why prices are so high in Japan. They are also part of why unemployment is so low. Some economists, in fact, view of these jobs as disguised welfare programs, financed through high prices rather than taxes.

Invariably, as Japan internationalizes, some firms are opting to follow the pattern and cut service to lower prices. Supermarkets and chain stores have gained ground. Department stores have done away with the woman who once bowed to every customer who stepped onto an escalator. Some shops now have a tape machine, not a person, saying "*irashaimase*", or welcome at the door.

Proliferation of American fast-food is another sign of these times. McDonald's now has 573 outlets in Japan. But characteristically,

cleanliness and employee courtesy seem to be generally higher than in the United States.

The Japanese over the years have borrowed heavily in commercial ideas from the United States but generally look elsewhere concerning service. There are exceptions, however, such as American-style home-delivery pizza. In the last two years, motorbikes darting around with pizza have been growing in numbers on Tokyo streets. Delivery in 30 minutes is guaranteed, or the customer gets \$5 back.

Exercise:

Both the ideas and the vocabulary in the following exercise are taken from the above text. Use the context provided to determine the meaning of the italicized words. Write a definition; synonym, or description of each of the italicized vocabulary items in the space provided.

- In Japan, good service is not considered
- 1-..... a *Luxury*, but a necessity. In most stores you will more salespeople than you would in a comparable store in the United States. This
- 2-..... larger sales *staff* allows the *proprietor* of the
- 3-..... store to spend time greeting customers.

What is considered an unnecessary

4- bother in the U.S., too much of a *fuss*, is considered fundamental in Japan. Owners of American shops might find giving personal attention to customers to be beneath them.

5-..... But this is not considered *demeaning* in Japan. On the contrary, personal attention is considered one of the necessary *ingredients* for business success. If a company provides good service, it hopes for customer loyalty during bad times. The hope is that customers would feel *treacherous* if they left a company with which they had a personal relationship. Thus, for the business person, being polite is as necessary for poor customers as it is for more *upscale* customers. And the courtesies shown customers exist through out Japan on a *national scale*.

One hopes that this will not change with the introduction and *proliferation* American-style stores.

10-.....

Baudoin *et al.*, 1997: 208-210

Résumé

Dans ce présent memoire, nous proposons d'analyser la diversite des Methodologies d'approche utilisées pour parvenir à résoudre le problème de la compréhension du vocabulaire pendant l'activité de lecture. Notre propos, sur le plan méthodologique, dans la mesure où texte méthode d'inverstigation réalise sa propre construction objet d'étude,il m'a semblé nécessaire de retenir une démarche relevant d'abord de l'évaluation de la stratégie, tout en anticipant sur le sémantisme des mots en contexte. Avant de parvenir à ce point qui constitue à mon sens le thème central de ma recherche, nous sommes intérogés d'abord sur les différentes approches suggérées par les chercheurs dans ce domaine. Le constat m'a conduit à construire une problématique de recherche s'articulant, autour de la notion de lecture chez les apprenants, en faisant apparaitre l'hétérogénéité des objectifs et la variation des itinéraire de lecture chez nos lecteurs. Dans un deuxième temps, nous essayons de montrer les stratégies permettant la compréhension du vocabulaire qui subdivisent en deux grandes catégories : La 1^{ère} englobe toutes les approches préconisées par le corps enseignant. La 2^{ème} approche est toute aussi originale et qui relève exclusivement des élèves, il s'agit d'une stratégie ou les apprenants utilisent le contexte pour inférer le sens des mots méconnus. Sur le plan méthologique, nous sommes

partis d'un constat en posant deux grandes questions : La première concerne la possibilité d'enseigner les lecteurs l'utilisation de cette stratégie d'inférer le sens des mots en utilisant le contexte, la 2^{ème} concerne le taux de réussite de la démarche proposée, ainsi que les acquisitions des lecteurs après la phase de remédiation.

Nous avons pour cela envisagé une configuration, basé une méthode pré-expérimentale où un échantillon de participants est d'abord prétesté, ensuite soumis à un traitement, puis posttesté afin de pouvoir évaluer objectivement le progrès enregistré en termes de comportement observable.

On se propose donc, d'analyser notre problématique présentement en milieu universitaire (1^{ère} Année LMD ; section Anglais, université Mentouri de Constantine) comme échantillon de notre objet de recherche, sur une des situations de constats de langue en situation d'apprentissage. Les résultats de notre recherche confirment toutes nos hypothèses de départ et se souscrivent totalement avec les recherches précédemment entreprises.

Les résultats peuvent avoir des implications pédagogiques positives dans le domaine de la lecture où il devient difficile de trouver quelqu'un qui maîtrise la langue étrangère ou quand l'utilisation de dictionnaire est impraticable

ملخص

يمثل هذا البحث محاولة جادة للتأكيد على أن تدريب القراء على طريقة استعمال

السياق لفهم المفردات اللغوية أثناء القراءة ممكنة.

ففي بداية البحث و قبل الخوض في الموضوع الرئيسي ، تطرقنا إلى مختلف النظريات

لمتبعة في تعريف القراءة و تحديد أهدافها ، والهدف من كل هذا هو التوطئة لمعالجة مشكلة

استنتاج معاني المفردات أثناء القراءة.

في واقع الأمر، تنقسم هذه الأساليب إلى مجموعتين: المجموعة الأولى تشمل كل

الطرائق التي يكون المعلم أو الأستاذ عنصرا أساسيا فيها، أما المجموعة الثانية فتخص الطرائق

الذاتية التي يكون محورها المتعلم نفسه و أهمها طريقة استعمال السياق لاستنتاج معاني المفردات.

في دراستنا هذه ، حاولنا الإجابة عن سؤالين مترابطين: يتعلق الأول بإمكانية تدريب

القراء على استعمال السياق لاستنباط معاني المفردات، أما الثاني فيتمحور حول مدى نجاعة هذه

الطريقة و مدى التحسن الذي يمكن أن يكتسبه الطلبة بعد خضوعهم للتدريب.

للإجابة عن هذين السؤالين، اتبعنا منهجا شبه تجريبي وهو استعمال فوج واحد يخضع

لامتحان قبلي و آخر بعدي يتخللهما تدريب على استعمال الطريقة، بعد ذلك يقاس مدى التقدم

المكتسب. اتخذنا كعينة طلبة السنة الأولى LMD من معهد اللغات الأجنبية، قسم اللغة الإنجليزية

بجامعة قسنطينة، و كانت النتائج تؤكد إمكانية استعمال هذه الطريقة، وهذا تأكيد لما توصل إليه

باحثون آخرون.

هذه النتائج يمكن أن تكون لها فوائد وتطبيقات بيداغوجية كثيرة خاصة في مجال

القراءة الفردية حين يتعذر وجود شخص يتقن اللغة ، وكذلك حين يصبح استعمال القاموس غير

ممكن نظرا لظروف القارئ