

## VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES IN TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

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### ABSTRACT

This article is an attempt to provide a review of some of the main vocabulary learning strategies in English language classes. It is impossible, because of limited space, to do justice to the many separate developments, and necessary, therefore, to provide a focus. This will be on three main strategies i.e. keyword, semantic processing method and contextual strategy. Each strategy is first defined, then examples are presented so as to make it explicit how it is employed in learning new vocabulary, whereas in the end the effectiveness of each strategy is viewed in the perspectives of some research studies carried out in this regard. The review ends with what should our attitude towards vocabulary be when teaching reading texts in English language classes.

### INTRODUCTION

For many years vocabulary was thought to be a less important element in learning a second language. Different reasons were offered for this neglect. Firstly, according to Carter and McCarthy (1988) before 1940 it was believed that vocabulary learning was the key to language learning. The learners thought that by learning a certain number of English words they would master the language. Both teachers and learners ignored the fact that it is not only the meaning of the words that one needs to know, but one must also know how the words work together in sentences. The result was that American linguists like Frier criticised this situation and vocabulary was pushed into the background. Moreover, this was the period of structural approach to English language teaching which laid great stress on teaching the sound system and syntactical structure of English language rather than vocabulary. Consequently, vocabulary was relegated to secondary status in favour of syntax. Secondly, as Allen (1983) maintains that some specialists in ELT methodology believed that vocabulary teaching is not a simple matter, but it is so complex a task that it cannot be dealt with in a class adequately. Thus it was assumed that teaching vocabulary was mere a waste of time. Thirdly, in the opinion of Judd (1978) the relegation of vocabulary to secondary status was the result of the view that the study of vocabulary distracts the learner from observing and using the syntactic