

**EFFECTIVENESS OF USING NEWSPAPERS TO IMPROVE
STUDENTS VOCABULARY IN ESSAY WRITING AMONG FORM
THREE STUDENTS**

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TO IMPROVE STUDENTS VOCABULARY
IN ESSAY WRITING AMONG FORM THREE STUDENTS**

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*I dedicate this piece of work to my loving mother, Madam Savandram, husband,
Mr. A. Sudhagar, beloved son Saran Kumar, my siblings and my friend, Irene for their love,
motivation and support.*

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ABSTRACT

Vocabulary learning is one of the major challenges that second language learners' face during the process of learning a language. In Malaysia, many students have difficulty in writing due to the lack of vocabulary. Thus, this study seeks to investigate whether the use of newspapers can help to enhance student's vocabulary to improve their essay writing. Twenty Form Three students from a secondary school were selected for this study to seek the effectiveness of using newspapers to teach vocabulary to improve student's essay writing. This study is a quasi-experimental design. For the purpose of this study, two sets of instruments were used to gather the data. The first was a pre-test and a post-test of writing an essay and the second was an interview to seek student's opinion regarding the use of newspaper to teach vocabulary to improve their essay writing. For the intervention, six treatments were administered. They consists of a rational cloze passage, matching words to its meaning, building words at sentence level and constructing sentences at paragraph level. After the intervention, students sat for the post test of writing an essay. The results were then computed using SPSS. The findings of the study showed positive results of employing newspapers to teach vocabulary when students showed improvement for their essays in the post-test. Furthermore, the vocabulary learning strategies have also helped the students to acquire vocabulary from the newspapers efficiently. Lastly, the findings from the interview showed that students enjoyed learning vocabularies from the two newspaper articles because it had brought benefits when they could the use lexical words in the right context from the newspaper articles for the post test.

ABSTRAK

Penguasaan tatabahasa adalah salah satu cabaran besar bagi pelajar bahasa kedua semasa mempelajari sesuatu bahasa. Di Malaysia, terdapat ramai pelajar yang mengalami masalah di dalam penulisan karangan disebabkan oleh penguasaan tatabahasa yang lemah. Oleh itu, kajian ini dijalankan bertujuan untuk melihat sama ada penggunaan surat khabar dapat membantu pelajar di dalam penguasaan tatabahasa bagi mempertingkatkan penulisan karangan mereka. Kajian ini adalah dalam bentuk kuasi-eksperimen. Bagi tujuan kajian ini, dua set instrumen akan digunakan untuk mengumpulkan data. Instrumen yang pertama adalah ujian pra dan ujian pos menulis sebuah karangan dan yang kedua adalah satu temu duga bagi mendapatkan pandangan pelajar tentang penggunaan surat khabar untuk mempelajari tatabahasa untuk meningkatkan karangan mereka. Intervensi sebanyak enam kali telah dijalankan bagi tujuan kajian ini. Ianya terdiri daripada satu isi tempat kosong menggunakan tatabahasa yang telah dipelajari, suaikan perkataan dengan maknanya, membina ayat dengan perkataan yang diberikan dan membina ayat bagi menghasilkan satu perenggan. Selepas enam rawatan telah dijalankan, pelajar akan menduduki ujian pos bagi menghasilkan sebuah karangan. Keputusan ujian pra dan pos akan di proses menggunakan SPSS. Hasil dapatan kajian menunjukkan keputusan yang positif tentang penggunaan surat khabar di dalam membantu penguasaan tatabahasa apabila pelajar-pelajar menunjukkan peningkatan di dalam markah karangan bagi ujian pos. Hasil kajian juga mendapati strategi pembelajaran tatabahasa juga telah membantu pelajar untuk menguasai tatabahasa daripada surat khabar dengan berkesan. Akhir sekali, melalui dapatan daripada temu duga didapati pelajar berasa amat seronok mempelajari tatabahasa daripada kedua-dua artikel surat khabar sebab ianya telah membawa banyak faedah apabila pelajar-pelajar dapat menggunakan perkataan yang dipelajari di dalam konteks yang betul di dalam ujian pos.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

L2	-	Second Language
PMR	-	Penilaian Menengah Rendah
FL	-	Foreign Language
SLA	-	Second Language Acquisition
VLs	-	Vocabulary Learning Strategies
NIE	-	Newspaper in Education
CO	-	Comprehensible Output

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CHAPTER 1

1.0 Introduction

In recent years, the importance of vocabulary acquisition has been emphasized by researchers and commentators, in that vocabulary acquisition plays a crucial role in learning a second language (Allen, 1983; Laufer, 1986; Nation, 1990; Richards, 1980; cited in Lawson and Hoghen, 1996). The significance of vocabulary in learning a language has become more accepted nowadays. As Griffiths (2003, 2006) points out, that recently the significance of teaching vocabulary has been acknowledged. Vocabulary is a basic component of language proficiency which provides the basis for learners' performance in other skills, such as speaking, reading, listening and writing. However, vocabulary teaching and learning is a constant challenge for teachers as well as students because historically there has been minimal focus on vocabulary instruction in the ESL classroom. Moreover, the problem of many second language teachers is teaching vocabulary to second language learners. Vocabulary acquisition is often deemed as a very difficult skill to master for learners especially in writing essays. Due to this, an increased emphasis on vocabulary development is crucial for the English language learner in the process of language learning. Thus, it is important for second language (L2) learners to acquire this skill by engaging themselves in challenging activities. This is the teacher's role to give proper pedagogical support, in developing learners to become good writers by acquiring vocabulary.

In addition, reading is the fundamental aspect of vocabulary learning. There is evidence that learners pick up new vocabulary and increase vocabulary depth through reading (Nation, 2001). This is further supported by the National Reading Council (2001), that vocabulary has been recognised in the development of reading skills. According to Chew (2007), 98% of older children (10 years and above) read only two books per year in a survey conducted by the National Library in 2007 in Malaysia. From the survey, it was discovered students do not find books in the school library appealing to them. The books in the school library are either uninteresting or boring to them. Some of them felt the books did not cater to their interest, making them lose interest in reading. Taking into considerations the reasons given by the students, the researcher felt using newspapers would be one way to instil the reading habit among students as it has real-life news and events as well as articles that interest them like sports articles, beauty tips, holiday destinations, career tips, cooking recipes and entertainment news. The newspaper not only gives information about these things but at the same time teaching students the language used to describe the story. The researcher feels that there is so much language used in the newspaper that will benefit the students. Furthermore, students can learn vocabulary from the newspapers because it is a rich authentic material. Thus, newspapers can help instil the reading habit among students with its interesting news as well as help them in language learning. It can also be understood that the use of newspapers in the classroom with secondary students is a worthwhile strategy that is worthy of attention to improve vocabulary among secondary students with its interesting news.

Nowadays, newspapers are used throughout the school year in every area of the curriculum (Kossack, 1987). Newspapers have been proven to provide special elements that have been well received by secondary students with writing problems (Clandfield, L.& Foord, D., 2006). They also stated that newspapers are much more current than course-books. They make an excellent springboard for lessons, and they feature different types of language learning (narratives, stories, letters, advertising, reports, etc.). Research has shown that both middle school and high school students improved in reading and writing as a result of a 55-day program using the daily newspaper as a resource (Palmer, B.C., Fletcher, H.J. & Shapley, B.A., 1994, *Newspaper Research Journal* Vol. 15, No. 5). In addition, according to Dr. DeRoche,

E., (1991), Dean of the School of Education, University of San Diego suggests that if students use newspapers as part of their independent reading at home and school, not only would they improve their reading achievement, particularly vocabulary and fluency, but they would also improve their knowledge of current events, people and places in the news, issues and problems of the day and so on.” (Why Newspaper-in-Education? www.freedom.com/nic/whynie.htm). He further said “For children to become competent lifelong learners, they must learn to use nonfiction materials to expand their knowledge base, solve problems and make decisions.” He further establishes the following facts:

- Newspapers help teach students to be effective readers
- Newspapers can help develop and improve student vocabulary, word recognition skills and comprehension
- Newspapers are effective tools for teaching many math concepts, particularly fractions, decimals, currency and averages
- Surveyed students overwhelmingly support the introduction of newspapers into the classroom and have a positive attitude towards reading newspapers

Besides, according to the results of empirical research conducted by the Florida Department of Education in conjunction with Knight-Ridder Newspapers ((Palmer, B.C., Fletcher, H.J.& Shapley, B.A., 1994, Newspaper Research Journal 15(2), 50-55), Newspaper-in-Education programs work when it comes to raising students’ scores in writing and making teachers happy. It was found that the eight graders who used the newspaper showed a 12% higher writing performance, as assessed by the Florida Department of Education GED scoring centre.

Thus, due to positive results on past research carried out on using newspapers in classrooms, the researcher now wants to investigate the effectiveness of using newspapers to improve student’s vocabulary in essay writing in SMK Damai Jaya among selected Form Three students using the marking descriptors for PMR given by the Malaysian Examination Syndicate and also use the Vocabulary Testing Scale given by Jacob et al. (1981). The marking descriptors for PMR given by the Malaysian Examination Syndicate will be used to mark the essays holistically while

Jacob's vocabulary testing scale is chosen by the researcher to see the whether the vocabulary used is with precision.

With regard to this study, the researcher feels that using newspapers is one way that could help students learn vocabulary to enable them to produce a good essay. Thus, this study particularly aims to seek whether the use of newspapers has improved student's vocabulary in helping their ability in writing. This chapter will also include the background of the study and the statement of the problem. Following that, the research questions, the scope of the study, the theoretical framework and the significance of the study are discussed. Finally the operational definitions will be discussed.

1.1 Background of the Study

One of the most important components of learning any foreign language is learning vocabulary. Vocabulary learning is important because it carries the words of what we want to speak or write. As we know, without words, we cannot learn a language and communicate precisely. "Vocabulary is by far the most sizeable and unmanageable component in the learning of any language, whether a foreign or one's mother tongue" because of "tens of thousands of different meanings," according to Hague (1987, p. 219). It can be inferred that learning vocabulary is important because it carries thousands of meanings which can help learners to be proficient and competent in the language.

However, in reality, vocabulary knowledge has been neglected or considered as a secondary emphasis in foreign language programs (FL) since it is felt that students need to master basic grammatical patterns and ability to communicate in English. Some researchers (Twaddell, 1973; Wilkins, 1974; Richards, 1976; Judd, 1978; Laufer, 1981; Morgan and Rinvoluceri, 1986; Carter and McCarthy, 1988; and Parker, 1989) claim that little importance has been given to vocabulary and the teaching of vocabulary or learning new words and phrases are often seen as an unimportant value, and it is even neglected most of the time in foreign language teaching. It was believed that vocabulary could be taught in isolation, thus it was

given insufficient attention. However, Twadell (1973: 61) admits that learners get an ability to understand and use words in the FL, but claiming the reason why it is not really taught is that no single method has gained a general acceptance in teaching vocabulary. I agree with Twadell's view because it is indeed true that there is no specific method that can be used in the teaching of vocabulary.

Furthermore, due to the cause of the difficulties of vocabulary learning in a second language (L2), one would expect that vocabulary instruction would be at the top of the agenda for language teachers. However, this is not the case. Language teachers do not explicitly teach vocabulary in most of their classes, and students are expected to "pick-up" vocabulary on their own without any guidance. Moreover, courses on reading, writing, speaking, listening, grammar, and culture are common in L2 programmes, but very few vocabulary courses are open. Most commonly found, vocabulary instruction involves merely giving students lists of words to memorize. Hague (1987) and Carter (1987) both decry the neglect of vocabulary instruction in second language classes, and they also suggest a variety of possibilities for rectifying the situation. They proposed seven major categories of vocabulary learning strategies namely Metacognitive Regulation, Guessing Strategies, Dictionary Strategies, Note-taking Strategies, Rehearsal Strategies, Encoding Strategies, and Activation Strategies 'Vocabulary learning strategies' refers to a wide spectrum of strategies used as part of an on-going process of vocabulary learning (Schmitt & Schmitt, 1995). Thus, it is important for teachers to use vocabulary learning strategies to teach vocabulary to the students and not just giving them a word list for them to memorise the words.

The value of vocabulary should not be undermined although vocabulary is not the only important component on its own in language learning. According to O'Dell (1997), vocabulary should be given a high profile in the syllabus and the classroom so that students can see its importance and understand that learning a language isn't just about learning grammar. As Wilkins (1974: 111) states, "without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed". Morgan and Rinvolutri (1986) also emphasize that words are essential and lack of them leads to a feeling of insecurity in language learning. Wilkins (1974: 131) states that learning nothing but words and a little and no structure would be useless to the

learner. He further adds structure and vocabulary are acquired together. Thus, Wilkins' study proved that vocabulary teaching and learning can progress through the incorporation of structure and vocabulary. Therefore, it can be concluded that the role of vocabulary is paramount.

In sum, vocabulary teaching has gained importance and researchers have found that students encounter some communication problems due to the lack of vocabulary. Communication breakdown occurs when people do not use the right words in context. Thus, it is obvious that the more words we know, the more precisely we can communicate with others.

Today, the main concern of improving student's language is vocabulary learning and it seems to be trying to find answers to the following questions;

- Which English words do students need to learn most?
- How can we make these words seem important to students?
- How can so many needed words be taught during the short time our students have for English?
- What can we do when few members of the class already know words that the others need to learn?
- Why are some words easier to learn than others?
- Which aids to vocabulary teaching are available?
- How can we encourage students to take more responsibility for their own vocabulary learning?
- What are some good ways to find out how much vocabulary the students have actually learned?

(Allen 1983: 6)

Thus, as you can see one of the ways of finding solutions to such problems is using English newspapers in ESL classroom. First of all, newspapers are useful aids to teach and learn vocabulary for many learners of English all over the world who like reading them. As Sanderson (1999) states newspapers have many benefits:

“The enormous variety of subject matter in newspapers means that any one newspaper will invariably contain something of value or concern to every reader. This makes them interesting and motivating for students to work with. Newspapers report real-life events, and this arouses our natural curiosity about the world around us and our fellow human beings.”

(Sanderson 1999: 3)

Students’ reading newspaper outside the classroom will make vocabulary learning effective and enjoyable. Furthermore, newspapers also supply meaningful authentic contexts. As Peacock (1997: 144) states “authentic materials like newspapers bring learners closer to the target language culture, making learning more enjoyable and therefore more motivating.” Learners are more likely to remember the words better than learning as single items. Words live within their own language and students should be aware of the fact that words live with other words. Thus, the researcher’s decision of using the newspaper is a worthwhile strategy to teach vocabulary because of its rich vocabulary making students more enjoyable and motivating to learn the new vocabularies in it.

Therefore, there are a lot of reasons for using newspapers in the classroom. For example; as Sanderson (1999: 2) states “newspapers help keep us informed about what is happening around the world, as a result, they extend our knowledge and deepen our understanding.” Moreover, newspapers contain various text types and students need to become familiar with such language forms. Besides, there is a variety of subject matter in newspapers and it will contain something interesting and motivating for students to work with.

In Malaysia, there is an urgent need to improve the standard of English as it is badly deteriorating. This can be seen through the poor results in the national examinations such as Penilaian Menengah Rendah (PMR) and Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM). This was expressed by the then Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad as cited in Pillay (1998) regarding the poor results of English among students in public exams. One of the reasons for their poor performance is the poor command of language and lack of vocabulary in their writing. Thus, one way to

overcome this is for teachers to use newspapers as a source of teaching vocabulary through its reports messages and information.

With regard to this study, the researcher has been teaching Form Three students in the school for approximately five years. It have been noticed the levels of proficiency of the students in writing vary greatly. A few of the students are above average and many are intermediate. Their essays lack ideas, elaborations and vocabulary. In addition, it has also been noticed that the students are very reluctant to write or write lesser than the minimum number of words required (the number of words required is not less than 120 words). According to Pillay (1998), students are hardly motivated in writing essays because they do not know how to start and what to write. They often complain or say, "I can't." They are not confident with their writing skills and often give up easily. Thus, the researcher decided to look for ways to excite and motivate the students and that is when the use of newspapers came to mind.

1.2 Statement of Problem

Although there seems to be a growing acceptance among SLA researchers that vocabulary is a crucial component of overall communicative competence (Schmitt and McCarthy, 1997), it is still an area that is often neglected both in and outside the classroom. Zimmerman (1997a) argues that "the teaching and learning of vocabulary has been undervalued in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) throughout its varying stages and up to the present day" (p. 5). Besides, Paribakht and Wesche (1997) point out that there still remains an enormous amount of research to be done in the vocabulary area as how learners can acquire vocabulary or how it can best be taught.

In addition, Judd (1978:72) pointed out that vocabulary is not given primary importance, and students are given basic grammatical patterns rather than simply words to understand and communicate. He further said learning new words or phrases are considered a secondary skill, and vocabulary instruction is seen as a means rather than a goal. Since, vocabulary is only taught as a grammatical item how

then can students learn vocabulary through its meaning and use it to communicate with others?

In terms of pedagogy, if vocabulary is addressed at all in the ESL classroom, it has traditionally been relegated to the role of incidental learning. Sokmen (1997) summarizes the way vocabulary has usually been handled:

For many of us, our perspective on the teaching of vocabulary was greatly influenced by the top-down, naturalistic approaches of the 1970s and 1980s. The emphasis was implicit, incidental learning of vocabulary. We were taught the importance of directing L2 learners to recognise clues in context. Textbooks emphasize inferring word meaning from context as the primary vocabulary skill (p.237).

Incidental learning of vocabulary has to a large extent, then, become a serious issue. Although, when vocabulary is taught more directly in the classroom, it tends to be via supplementary workbooks containing word manipulation exercises, rather than as a main element of the curriculum. In my view, vocabulary needs to be taught as a topic by its own just like grammar and not only taught in comprehension passages because students will not be able to acquire it when they learn and see the word only once. Vocabulary can only be acquired when students use the words in their communication and also writing. Linguists have contrasting views on how many times learners need to be exposed to a lexical item before they can commit it to memory. According to Whorf (2002), it is not only the amount of times a learner encounters the word but also how well learners encounter a lexical item that determines how well they retain it. If learners encounter a lexical item many times but do not do much with it (incidental learning), the learners are likely not to retain it. If the learners are actively involved in processing the lexical items (intentional learning), they are likely to remember them. It is therefore the teachers' responsibility to create meaningful contexts in which learners have the opportunity to recycle and reuse the vocabulary they have learned (Whorf, 2002).

Due to the incidental learning of vocabulary, the researcher has discovered that many students in her school are not performing well in essay writing because

they have poor grasp of vocabulary. Vocabulary is only taught in reading comprehension passages and sometimes introduced in writing. As a result, they do not score well in the exam. Indeed, trying to motivate students to write has been a challenging task for many teachers nowadays. Many students do not take pride in their work or are just satisfied with what they write. According to Benson (2000), teachers are spending too much time and energy on writing, but students are still doing mediocre work. She believes that there is a need for change in education because of this lack of motivation.

Moreover, our Malaysian Education System puts much focus on examination. Therefore, most teachers lay their focus on improving student's writing since the guided essay writing carries 25 marks in the PMR for Paper Two. Many students fail to do well in Paper Two because they are not often able to write good essays. This is seen by the researcher as she has been an examiner for the PMR English paper and has seen that students mainly have difficulty in writing good essays because of lack of vocabulary knowledge.

Based on these existing setbacks, the researcher is driven to conduct this study to see whether the use of newspapers will improve student's vocabulary in helping their ability for writing. Moreover, the researcher being an English teacher herself strongly feels this study would serve as a guideline for her and other teachers to think of alternative pedagogical strategies to overcome student's problems in essay writing.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate whether the use of newspaper has improved student's vocabulary in their essay writing. This study also seeks to discover the perceptions of students in using newspaper to improve their essay writing.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this particular study are:

- To investigate whether the use of newspapers have improved student's vocabulary in their essay writing.
- To uncover the perception of students in using newspapers to improve their essay writing.

1.5 Research Questions

Two research questions were formulated for the purpose of this study. The research questions are:

1. To what extent is there improvement in marks related to vocabulary in student's essay writing?
2. In what ways does the use of newspapers bring effect to student's use of vocabulary in their essay writing?
3. What are the student's perceptions in using newspapers to improve their essay writing?

1.6 Conceptual Framework for this study

The researcher has decided to use a conceptual framework for this study. Since this study is using newspapers as the way to teach vocabulary, the theory of Krashen's Input hypothesis is significant to be used in this study because newspapers are used as the input to teach vocabulary to the students. As Gass (1997: 1) points out that no individual can learn a second language (L2) without input of some sort. Thus, the researcher feels that the newspaper can be used as the input to teach vocabulary to the students. This is further supported by Eskey (2002) that reading is regarded as a major source of comprehensible input and as the skill that many serious learners most need to employ.

The researcher had chosen newspaper articles as a way to teach vocabulary because it has rich vocabulary content. This supports Krashen's view that the teacher's responsibility is to ensure that the students receive enough input that is comprehensible to them. Krashen (1982) stated that input that is optimal should be comprehensible and interesting. Since newspaper has many interesting stories it will be the best material to be used to teach vocabulary. Furthermore he further stated that language learners can acquire language through reading material like newspapers that contain vocabulary and structures that are only a bit beyond their current level of competence, i.e., "i + 1. Krashen further relates his Input Hypothesis to reading by claiming that reading for meaning is comprehensible input, and is the source of much of our competence in literacy, our reading ability, writing style, much of our vocabulary and spelling competence, and our ability to use and understand complex grammatical constructions (Krashen, 2002c). Based on Krashen's claims that reading can improve writing style and vocabulary, the newspaper will be the best reading material to teach vocabulary to improve student's writing.

Therefore, this study has adopted Krashen's comprehensible input hypothesis into this study because the newspaper will be used to teach vocabulary. Moreover, evidence has been provided that comprehensible input is necessary for language acquisition (Krashen, 1980, 1982; Long, 1985). Thus, the vocabulary content in the newspaper articles is regarded as the comprehensible input by the researcher because she uses lexical words related to '**Fire**' to teach vocabulary to her students like **guttled, billowing, belongings, doused, scene, hastily, casualties, despatched, blaze, shelter and others**. The researcher chose a suitable comprehensible input like the newspaper articles because newspapers are authentic materials from which students can learn many new words related to real-life incidences.

In addition, by reading the newspaper articles it also helps to tap student's background knowledge of the topic. The very important role of background knowledge on reading comprehension is noted by Anderson (1999) that a reader's comprehension depends on her ability to relate the information that she gets from the text with her pre-existing background knowledge. Thus, in the reading process, readers need to integrate the new information from the text into their pre-existing

schemata (Wallace, 2001). The schema theory mainly deals with the reading process, where readers are expected to combine their previous experiences with the text they are reading. Therefore, students should have schemata in order to make sense of any text. With the help of schemata, the students will be able to understand the text very quickly and effectively and get an idea of what is being written. Furthermore by having schemata knowledge, students can have a general idea of the content and the language used in the article. Therefore, for this study the researcher decided to use the schema theory to activate the schemata of the students. By having schemata of the event, it will make students have a general idea of the whole text and be able to understand and comprehend the text much easier. Students will feel motivated when they have some knowledge of the text.

After that, the researcher has decided to use vocabulary learning strategies as intervention to teach vocabulary to her students so that her students will learn vocabulary effectively. She has decided to use Gu and Johnson's (1996) and Schmitt's (1997) vocabulary learning strategies because some of the activities suggested by them are being used in the treatment. The researcher feels by using vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs), it will help the language learners to acquire new English words. According to Gu (1994), particular strategies used by second language learners for the acquisition of new words in the second language is called 'vocabulary learning strategies'. Vocabulary Learning Strategies can be divided into two major areas; vocabulary acquisition and language learning strategies. Vocabulary acquisition research is centered on a description of the process of vocabulary learning while language learning strategies is learner-oriented, and focuses on investigating how individual learners approach vocabulary learning. Although, the two research areas are different by nature; they tend to be treated as almost the same because they both deal with vocabulary learning. Schmitt (1997), points out this fact by stating "appreciation of the importance of both these areas has led to vocabulary learning strategies to be incorporated in vocabulary learning" (p. 199).

Considering different tasks require different strategy sets, Schmitt (1997), proposed a categorization scheme which contains these perspectives. He utilized Oxford's (1990) taxonomy and added a new category so that the overall taxonomy

can be divided into discovery strategies (initial discovery of a word's meaning) and consolidation strategies (remembering the word once and it has been encountered) while Gu and Johnson (1996) compiled a VLS questionnaire in which they included two major categories: metacognitive and cognitive.

According to Gu and Johnson (1996), metacognitive strategies control the whole process of vocabulary learning by planning, monitoring and evaluating the cognitive strategies. Gu (2003b) states, "each of these task stages demands metacognitive judgement, choice and deployment of cognitive strategies for vocabulary learning, and each strategy a learner uses will determine to a large extent how well a new word is learned" (p. 3). Thus, by using the metacognitive strategies, it is hoped that learners will acquire the vocabulary through the strategies suggested like dictionary strategy, social strategy and note-taking.

Below is the flow chart of the conceptual framework for this study using Gu and Johnson;s (1996) and Schmitt's (1997) vocabulary learning strategies.

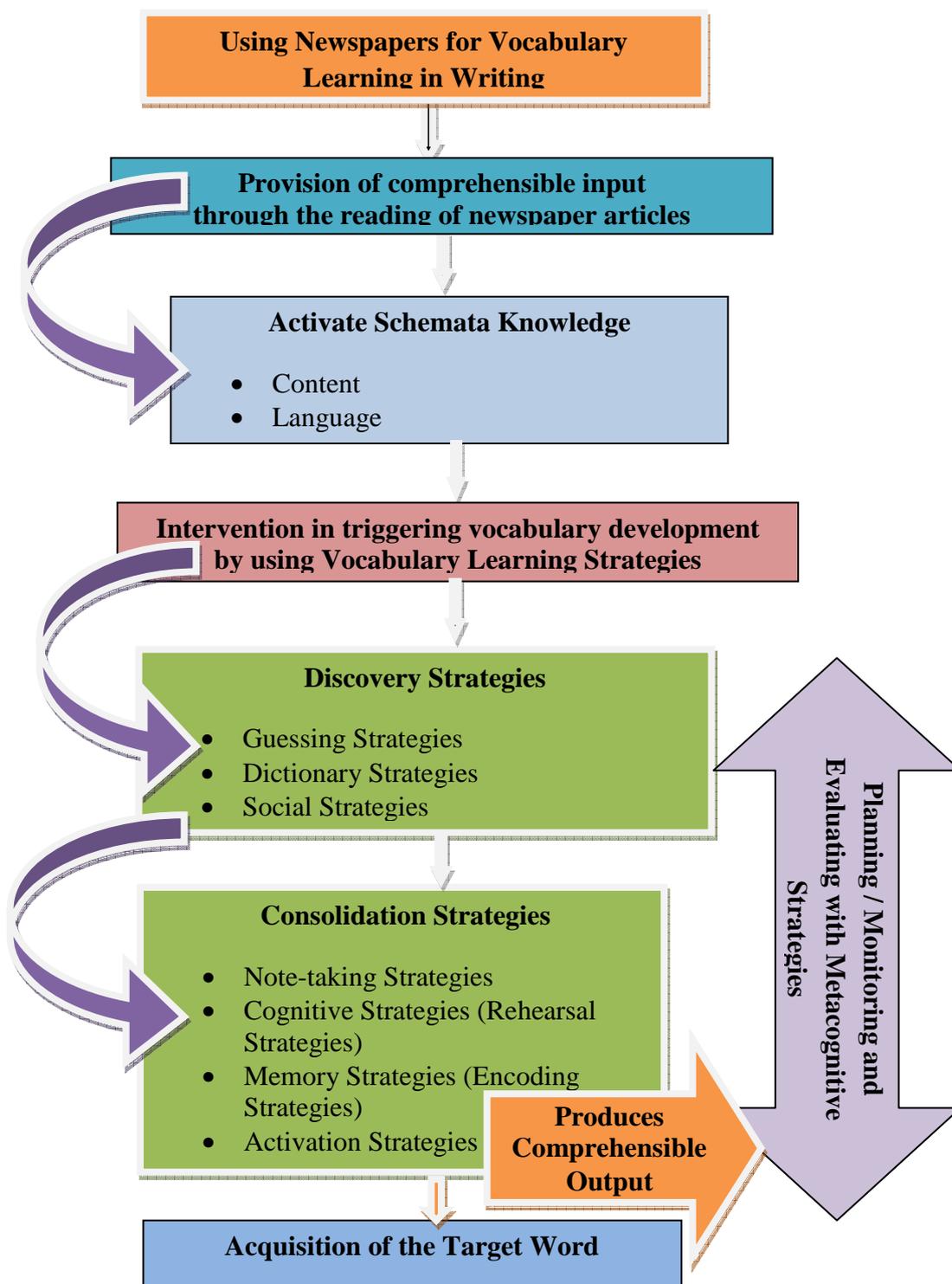


Figure 1.1 Classification of Vocabulary Language Strategies (Adapted from Gu and Johnson, 1996 and Schmitt 1997)

Figure 1 above illustrates the taxonomy integrating the categories proposed by Schmitt (1997 and Gu and Johnson (1996). The first strategy is the discovery

strategy. Discovery strategy focuses on the strategies used when the learners encounter an unknown word in listening or reading. They guess or infer its meaning from the context (guessing strategies) by using their schemata knowledge, look it up in a dictionary (dictionary strategies), or ask others (social strategies) to find out the meaning of the word. With regards to this study, the researcher uses the discovery strategy by making the students use the dictionary strategy to look out for the meaning of lexical words related to 'Fire' when she introduces both the newspaper articles. On the other hand, some students will resort to asking their friends for the meaning of the words they are not familiar with. This method uses the social strategies.

The next strategy is consolidation strategies. In this strategy, you will see some learners memorising words. First, learners may take notes in a margin or space between the lines, on a vocabulary notebook, vocabulary card or on a piece of paper (note-taking strategies). Next, they may repeat (rehearse) the word a number of times (Cognitive strategies, or rehearsal strategies in Gu & Johnson, 1996) which is considered a shallow mechanical means of processing (Schmitt, 1997). Some learners may proceed to actively manipulate information (memory strategies or encoding strategies in Gu & Johnson, 1996). The most common memory strategies used by learners are the key word method and using related or unrelated words. In this study, the researcher uses the memory strategy by using the key word method in introducing the lexical words related to 'Fire' in the both newspaper articles.

The final stage of consolidation strategies is using the word actively in writing or speaking (activation strategies). Folse (2006), found that fill-in-blank exercises resulted in better retention measured with (Vocabulary Knowledge Scale, Wesche & Paribakht, 1996). According to Keating (2008), writing a sentence using a newly-learned word is good for vocabulary retention. He further said, "sentence writing with the target words is the most effective method of vocabulary learning (p.372)". For this study the researcher uses the activation strategy by giving exercises like rational cloze questions, building words at sentence level and further proceeds to building sentences at paragraph level. The activation strategy is regarded as the output as what Swain (1995) had proposed in her output hypothesis that learners learn language when they produce the language as practise.

According to Merrill Swain (1995), comprehensible output consists of three functions noticing functions, hypothesis-testing function and metalinguistic function. In the noticing function the learners know what they want to say but are unable to communicate it. Therefore, the teacher must provide the opportunity for the learners to speak their views. This can be done through practice and verbally communicating in the classroom with the teacher and the peers. Next, is the hypothesis-testing function. It is when the learners use vocabulary and realises that the vocabulary is not always correct and they receive feedback in order to improve their essay writing. This enables the learners to re-correct the vocabulary used through corrective feedback by the teacher and peers. Interaction within the classroom with teacher and peers can assist the learners to improve their vocabulary. Third is the metalinguistic function. The learners reflect upon the language learned and this enables them to control their output and internalize their linguistic knowledge.

After the first two functions, the students should be able to internally reflect on what they have learned through the corrective feedback given by the teachers and peers which is called the metalinguistic function. Moreover, strategic cooperative grouping in which a more skilled learner supports the linguistic utterances of a less fluent speaker has been found to be extremely useful for promoting “comprehensible output”. Since this cooperative grouping is useful, this study has adopted cooperative grouping when the researcher does a group work activity in which the students have to build sentences at paragraph level. The group consists of good and average proficiency students. The average students learn to make sentences by using the correct vocabulary and finally are able to write a good essay in the post test.

In this study, the researcher adopted Swain’s output hypothesis because she had used all the three functions in her activities which include written exercises as practises given to the students, presentation of sentences at paragraph level by the students which includes corrective feedback by the teacher and lastly cooperative grouping in which students work in groups to build sentences at paragraph level during the treatments. In the final stage, she asks the students to write an essay in the post-test to see whether they have included the vocabularies they have learnt from the newspaper articles into their essay and see whether they have improved their vocabulary development. Thus, the essay given to the students in the post test is the

output being produced by the students after learning the vocabularies in the treatments.

In sum, the researcher feels that choosing newspaper is a wise idea to teach vocabulary to students because it is rich in vocabulary content. In addition the researcher also feels that by adopting vocabulary learning strategies like through the discovery and consolidation strategies and their sub-strategies (Figure 1) as suggested by Schmitt and Gu and Johnson have helped to activate the student's schemata to guess the meaning of the words through its context and also based on their previous knowledge. By using the vocabulary learning strategies and also incorporating Swain's output functions, students can learn vocabulary more effectively and improve in writing their essays.

1.7 Significance of the Study

This study is vital in that newspapers can be used as a resource to teach vocabulary to students to improve their essay writing since it is rich in words. As Sanderson (1999) states, newspapers are invaluable source of authentic materials and their use in the language classroom is very much in keeping with current thinking and practise in teaching pedagogy and of course it can be helpful for learning and recalling more vocabulary easily. Hence, the more the learner reads the more vocabulary they learn and the easier they recall the words.

Furthermore, the newspaper being an authentic material is suitable to be used in language learning classroom because other teaching materials like teaching coursewares, and charts are already provided to teachers by the Curriculum Department. The researcher highlighted this point because since there are many teaching coursewares provided for teachers, they tend to use them to teach language in class. Students are bored with the teaching coursewares being used by the teachers all the time. They want different teaching materials used to teach language. Therefore, the researcher finds using authentic material like newspapers will be a good choice to attract and motivate students to language learning. As motivation is the key factor to language teaching, newspapers will make a valuable source in language classrooms. This is because there are various subject matters in the

newspaper which will invariably be of value or concern to every reader. This makes them interesting and motivating for students to work with. For this important reason, teachers should be open to new techniques and not just teach vocabulary from textbooks or workbooks. As Sanderson (1999) states, newspapers help develop student's vocabulary skills, increase knowledge and encourage a positive attitude towards learning. Thus, the researcher strongly believes that this study of using newspapers will be helpful to teachers in teaching vocabulary items to students to improve their writing skills.

Besides, the exposure to authentic materials like newspapers will make students to read newspapers because it provides real-life events and this will arouse the student's natural curiosity about the world around them. The newspapers will help them internalize world background knowledge, language conventions and vocabulary by exposure through reading. By reading the real-life events, it will indirectly help students to cultivate the habit of reading and to improve their language as well through the interesting articles. Thus, students will start reading the newspapers during their free time to know what is happening around them besides learning new words. In addition, with the help of reading newspapers in the classrooms, students discover their own interests. This makes the students more motivated to read on their own accord outside the classroom and this as a result, extends the students contact with vocabulary.

Moreover, using newspapers in classroom teaching will help build students vocabulary for their essay writing. This is because students will learn how to use words in context when they are reading the newspaper articles. Since this study is focusing on a descriptive essay on a 'Fire' incident, using newspapers will be the best teaching material to be used by the researcher because real-life incidents of such events are reported in newspapers. Students will learn the content words related to 'Fire' from the newspaper article. It will be exciting for the students to read these articles because these are real-life incidents and indirectly they will learn the vocabulary described in the event. This will be useful because once they know how to use the vocabulary in context; they will be able to use the vocabulary with precision for their essay writing.

Lastly, newspapers will be a good teaching material to teach English. This is because of its availability to schools nowadays. Newspaper companies like The Star and The News Straits Times are providing free distribution of newspapers to schools to help improve the English Language proficiency among students. In addition, these two newspaper companies have also extended their help through its Newspaper in Education programme (NIE). The ultimate aim of the NIE is to help improve English proficiency among students. Through its NIE programme, The Star provides a variety of resources for teachers and students like workshops for teachers, the monthly Star-NIE Supplement and NIE pages in Education pullout. Moreover, the contents of their worksheets are in line with the National English Language Syllabus provided by the Malaysian Ministry of Education. This clearly shows that newspaper is a useful material to be used for language learning because of its educational content and knowledge it provides to readers

Thus, in view of the fact that many students are weak in vocabulary for their essay writing, teachers must find ways to improve their vocabulary and one of the way is using the newspapers because of its rich content in language. Besides, newspapers will help cultivate the reading habit through its real-life events and at the same time build their worldly knowledge. In addition, newspaper is the best teaching material to be used for this study by the researcher because she is teaching a descriptive essay on 'Fire'. Since there are many reports on fire incidences that can be found in the newspaper, it will be the best teaching material to be used as it is an authentic material. This type of writing is specifically chosen by the researcher because descriptive writing of incidents like fire, flood, robbery, accident and snatch-thefts are tested in the PMR exam for essay writing. Furthermore, since the Malaysian Education System puts much focus on examination, most schools aim to ensure that their students produce excellent results in the examination. Meanwhile, many teachers put great effort to ensure that their students attain good results in the exam and at the same time making their lessons fun, creative and interesting for the students. Thus, this study of using newspapers may be significant to teachers and students in order to develop and improve students' writing.

1.8 Scope of the Study

The participants involved in this study are students of a secondary school in Johor Bahru. The school selected for this study is SMK Damai Jaya, Skudai, Johor Bahru. This school is a sub-urban school which started operation in 1999 accommodating one thousand three hundred and twenty five students from Form Five to date.

The group of students chosen are twenty between fourteen to fifteen years old Secondary Three students who are in the second class in terms of ranking from a list of eight classes with a total of two hundred and thirty nine form three students overall. The students chosen are mixed of boys and girls and also consist of different races of Malay, Chinese and Indians. In terms of proficiency in the English Language, the students can be categorised in the intermediate level because most of the students attained a 'B' and with exception of two students obtaining an 'A' for their overall English paper. However for their essay writing, they are in the satisfactory band according to the PMR Band Descriptors given by the Malaysian Examination Syndicate based on their Form Two Final Exam essay results. Since writing is only 25 marks out of 90 marks of the overall English PMR Paper, students can still get an A or a B because there are other sections that can help the students like the Multiple Choice Questions which consist of Graphic Stimuli, Rational Cloze, Phrasal Verbs and Idiomatic Expressions, Reading Comprehension, Summary Writing and Literature. However, the researcher discovered that many form three students in her school have difficulty in writing essays because they have insufficient vocabulary to write their essays due to the lack of reading.

Thus, the researcher decided to use newspaper as a teaching material to teach vocabulary to improve the student's writing and also encourage reading among them to improve their vocabulary knowledge. In addition, this study is conducted to primarily investigate whether the use of newspapers among the twenty students will help improve their vocabulary in their essay writing. In relation to the study too, the twenty samples from the pre and post tests conducted on the selected learners were collected and analyzed to distinguish whether the use of newspapers has improved their vocabulary in their essay writing.

1.9 Limitations of the Study

In the course of carrying out this research, the results were limited to several factors. First, the population was the Form Three students in all the secondary schools in the country. The sample was taken from a sub urban secondary school in Johor. The study was conducted with 20 respondents only. Thus the results may differ if the respondents were more than the number of subjects used in the study. This is because a larger group of respondents may not be as effective because the teacher would not be able to pay attention to all students when it comes to vocabulary acquisition. This may result in the decline of performance of the students.

Next, the respondents involved in the study were from the intermediate group. Thus, the findings may vary if the study was conducted with the low and high level of proficiency students. This is because students who have high proficiency are already reading books or newspapers and they have a good grasp of vocabulary. On the other hand, students who have low proficiency will not be able to learn and understand the vocabulary because they have a poor grasp of the language. They will become demotivated to learn the language. Thus, the teacher has to be really aware about the student's proficiency level before choosing the students for the vocabulary learning lesson.

Besides, the researcher feels this study is rather a short stint because it has to be completed in 4 weeks. Thus, only two newspaper articles were used to teach vocabulary to write this essay. If the study is longer, more newspaper articles can be used and students can learn more vocabularies. Students would have benefitted more if the duration was longer and if more newspaper articles were used to teach vocabulary in different contexts for them.

Furthermore, twenty students were only chosen for this study. If more students were chosen with more teachers, it can help many students to improve their vocabulary. However, if more teachers are involved they will probably take a longer time to conduct the treatments because they have to teach the syllabus.

The researcher feels this study was rather a short stint because it had to be completed in three months. This was because only two newspaper articles could only be used to teach the vocabulary for this essay. If the study was longer, more newspaper articles can be used and students can learn more vocabularies.

1.10 Definition of Terms

The important terms used throughout this study are as follows:

Schemata theory

Schemata Theory means structured frameworks of knowledge about the world and the language. Schema theory describes the process by which readers combine their own background knowledge with the information in a text to comprehend that text. Schemata have also been described as “...*cognitive constructs which allow for the organization of information in the long term memory...*” (Widdowson 1983:34).

Newspaper articles in classroom teaching

Newspaper simply means using newspapers as a tool by teachers conducting classroom activities for the purpose of language learning. For example, teachers use articles from the newspapers to teach vocabulary. Thus, in this study, newspaper is used to introduce vocabularies in related articles to improve students' essay writing.

Vocabulary

According to Oxford Quick Reference Dictionary (1998), vocabulary refers to a group of meaningful words/lexicons in the English Language. In this study, the vocabularies introduced by the researcher in the first newspaper article on 'Fire' are crackling, salvage, emanating, billowing, scene, belongings, gutted, hastily, ascertained, put out, avail and saddened. On the other hand in the second newspaper article the vocabularies include state of

shock, prized, not spared, sustained, by the hour, ablaze, raging flames, razed, broke out and burns.

Essay Writing

An essay is a piece of writing which is often written from an author's personal point of view. Essays can consist of a number of elements, including: literary criticism, political manifestos, learned arguments, observations of daily life, recollections, and reflections of the author.

Perceptions`

the way in which something is regarded, understood, or interpreted

Authentic Materials

Authentic texts have been defined as “...*real-life texts, not written for pedagogic purposes*” (Wallace 1992:145). *It is a written or spoken text in which a first language speaker would read or listen to like they may be taken from newspapers and magazines.*

Comprehensible Input and Output

Comprehensible Input (CI) is based on Krashen's Input Hypothesis which states that 'human acquire language in only one way which is by understanding the messages or receiving the comprehensible input' (Krashen, 1985). Comprehensible Output developed by Merrill Swain, states that learning takes place when encountering a gap in the linguistic knowledge of the L2. By noticing this gap the learner becomes aware of it and might be able to modify his output so that he learns something new about the language. Although Swain does not claim that comprehensible output is solely responsible for all or even most language acquisition, she does claim that

under some conditions, CO facilitates second language learning in ways that differ from and enhance input due to the mental processes connected with the production of language.

1.11 Conclusion

In conclusion, the poor performance in English Language in the schools and public examinations arouse the awareness to take measures to improve students' performance in English Language. Thus, newspaper is one of the ways to assist English language teachers and to promote its uses in schools. Thus, this study mainly intends to investigate whether the use of newspaper will help students to improve their vocabulary in their essay writing and student's and teacher's opinions in using newspaper as a tool to improve vocabulary in student's essay writing. The following chapter presents the review of the related literature.

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