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## TECHNIQUES FOR AUTONOMOUS VOCABULARY LEARNING

### ANNOTATION

The ability to acquire and utilize vocabulary is essential for effective communication in any language. Traditional language learning often relies on teacher-led instruction; however, autonomous vocabulary learning encourages learners to take responsibility for their own learning processes. This article is devoted to considering various techniques that facilitate independent vocabulary acquisition, thereby enhancing learners' engagement and retention.

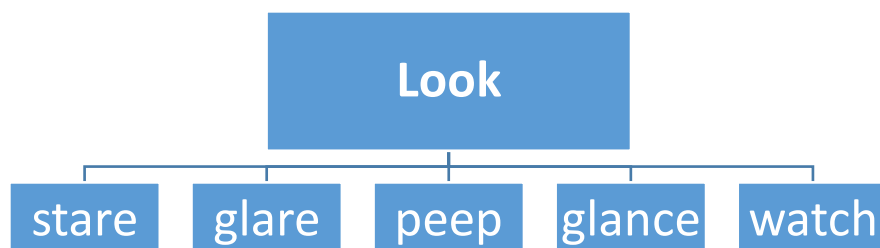
**Keywords:** students' autonomy, vocabulary acquisition, student-centered practices.

### *Introduction*

Everyone has a unique way of learning words. For some people, random word lists with translations into their mother tongue appear to be the most appropriate. Others will prefer some form of organizing, such as categorizing their vocabulary by topic, word category, or word frequency. Some students will find it helpful to utilize vocabulary exercises to learn new vocabulary, whereas others will use vocabulary cards and constantly test themselves to see if new items have been learnt. All of these strategies are useful in their own right and will benefit different people in different ways. However, they frequently overlook the use of word relationships inside the target language. Making use of these connections can be a highly useful extra strategy for classifying and learning words, and it can also help in the acquisition and retention of new words by students. These relationships include, for example:

### *Hyponymy.*

Seat kinds include chair, bench, armchair, bar stool, pew, rocking chair and deck chair. As a result, they share a one-way relationship with the head-word seat and are related to each other as instances of the same type (a chair is a seat, a bench is a seat, and so on, but a seat is not always a chair). Vehicle types include cars, buses, vans, trams, lorries, motorbikes, and taxis. It could be beneficial for learners to group vocabulary terms together under head words like these in the following manner, using simple diagrams or "spider-grams":



Naturally, these diagrams can be expanded each time a new word in this category appears.

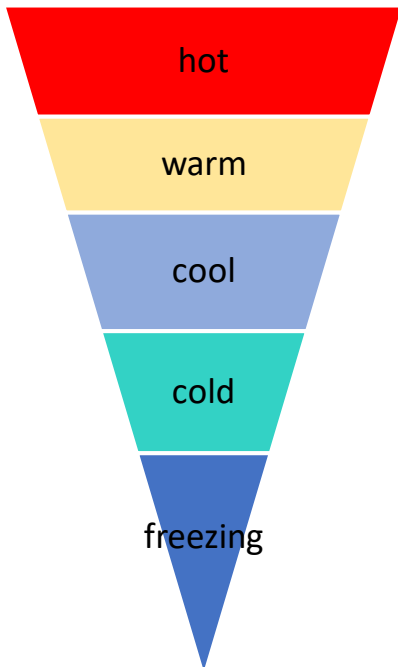
*Antonymy.*

Word associations seem to be particularly effective when based on their opposites. Many people will instantly respond “cold” when asked what word they identify with “hot”, as opposed to words like “desert”, “sun”, or “weather”. It could be helpful for students to save terms that represent concepts that are at odds with one another, like this:



*Clines.*

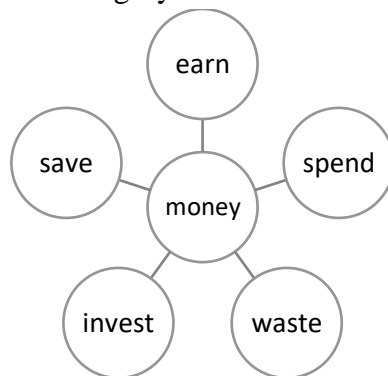
Many adjectives, despite having similar meanings, are not synonyms; rather, their meaning expresses a larger or lesser degree of a specific concept. Furthermore, learners may find it beneficial to store words in this manner. Gaps in the diagrams can be filled when new vocabulary is learnt.



For example, for weather adjectives, the phrases “boiling” and “mild” can be added to the diagram.

*Collocation.*

It is certainly beneficial to acquire terms that often “go together”, such as “complete a task”, “make a suggestion”, and “do one’s homework”. Words can also be stored in this form as diagrams or mind maps, which can help with recall and memory. Verb + noun collocations can be organized based on the noun category:



It can be important to bring out to students the benefits of storing vocabulary items in the ways described above. Using such diagrams and mind maps would likely appeal to the more visual student (especially if various colors are utilized), but storing vocabulary items in a more systematic manner should benefit the majority of students.

### *Methods*

During this scientific research, qualitative and secondary data analysis methods were utilized to highlight effectiveness of students' autonomy in vocabulary acquisition. The concept of learner autonomy is intricate and has been studied by many scholars in the field of education. According to Little (1991), autonomy is centered around the idea that students should take responsibility for their own learning. This responsibility encompasses several aspects that have traditionally been managed by teachers, such as:

- ***Deciding on Learning Objectives.*** Learners are encouraged to identify what they want to achieve in their learning journey, which fosters a sense of ownership over their educational goals.

- ***Selecting Learning Methods.*** Autonomy allows learners to choose how they wish to learn, whether through collaborative projects, independent study, or other methods that suit their individual preferences and styles.

- ***Evaluating Progress.*** Learners are empowered to assess their own progress, which helps them develop critical thinking and self-reflective skills.

Little's definition of learner autonomy emphasizes the interactive nature of this process, where teachers play a crucial role in gradually increasing the learners' control over their learning experiences. This gradual release of responsibility helps students become more independent and self-directed. Littlewood (1996) further supports this notion by asserting that one of the primary goals of teaching should be to cultivate learners who can think and act autonomously. This perspective highlights the importance of developing strategies that promote autonomy within language teaching contexts. Holec (1981) provides a framework for understanding self-directed learning, identifying key components that contribute to a fully autonomous learning process:

- ***Fixing the Objectives.*** Learners must define what they aim to achieve in their studies.

- ***Defining the Content and Progressions.*** They should determine what content will help them reach their objectives and how it will be structured.

- ***Selecting Suitable Methods and Techniques for Implementation.*** Learners should choose the most effective methods and techniques for their learning style and goals.

- ***Monitoring the Acquisition Procedure.*** They need to track their learning process, making adjustments as necessary to enhance their understanding and skills.

Fostering learner autonomy involves a shift from teacher-centered approaches to more student-centered practices, where learners are actively engaged in shaping their own educational experiences. This approach not only enhances motivation but also prepares learners for lifelong learning by equipping them with essential skills for self-direction.

### *Results*

The importance of autonomy in vocabulary acquisition cannot be overstated, as mastering a foreign language involves learning its vocabulary. Words are stored and retrieved in the brain, and to effectively remember and use them for communication, learners must engage in repetition. Language learning strategies play a crucial role in both teaching and learning, particularly in fostering learner autonomy. Given that students cannot possibly learn all the vocabulary required during classes alone, they must seek additional methods for vocabulary acquisition.

Learner autonomy significantly benefits students in their vocabulary learning journey by offering several advantages:

- It boosts learners' motivation, leading to more effective vocabulary retention and usage.

- It creates more opportunities for English communication in non-native settings.

- It addresses the individual needs of learners at various proficiency levels.

- It fosters self-confidence among learners.

- It encourages an engaged approach to learning.

### *Discussion*

In a context where learners are encouraged to take charge of their vocabulary acquisition, the role of the teacher shifts from being a primary source of knowledge to that of a facilitator. However, this does not imply that teachers become disengaged from the learning process. They still play crucial roles, such as teaching vocabulary relevant to specific tasks and guiding students in strategies that enhance retention. It is essential for teachers to promote autonomous learning, as it is particularly beneficial for university students. Additionally, educators should instruct students on how to learn vocabulary independently.

Deep vocabulary learning strategies may require more time but lead to better retention and recall. These strategies include creating word lists, reading diverse texts on similar topics for repeated exposure, utilizing dictionaries extensively, forming word associations, and revising material to reinforce memory. While teachers may have a limited role when students employ shallow learning strategies effectively, they have a significant and ongoing responsibility to incorporate deep strategies into classroom activities and to train students in their application. This is especially important for weaker learners who often use shallow strategies ineffectively; they might make inaccurate guesses based on context without correcting them later and may not engage in enough extensive reading. It is the teacher's duty to nurture students' capacity for autonomous learning by designing engaging class activities, fostering a positive environment, and cultivating a language-rich context that motivates students to learn and understand how to learn. Since vocabulary acquisition is unique to each learner and class time for vocabulary instruction is limited compared to the vast number of words students need to learn, it is imperative for learners to study vocabulary independently. Ultimately, the best support a teacher can provide is to help students develop greater autonomy in their learning (Scharle, 2000).

### *Conclusion*

This research emphasizes the importance of instructional implications that contribute to the development of extensive and practical vocabularies. It highlights that extensive reading is crucial for building knowledge, and teachers can support this by teaching students' strategies for independent word learning. This includes utilizing dictionaries and reference materials, as well as examining the relationship between spelling and vocabulary acquisition. Ultimately, it is not the teacher's job to cover every word; instead, learners should take initiative by employing strategies that align with their individual learning styles.

Vocabulary acquisition can be challenging, but with consistent practice and time, learners will notice their improvement. It is beneficial for learners to focus on words that appear in various contexts, as learning within rich contexts enhances vocabulary development. The vocabulary chosen should be relevant and applicable across multiple situations. When vocabulary is drawn from content-specific materials, learners will be better prepared to engage with specialized reading in those subjects. Effective vocabulary learning involves active participation in learning activities. Additionally, technology can be a valuable tool for autonomous vocabulary learning. To succeed as independent learners, students should maintain a continuous motivation to expand their vocabulary and develop personalized strategies for their learning processes.

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