

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**A SOCIOCOGNITIVE APPROACH TO L3 VOCABULARY ACQUISITION:
THE CASE OF EFL LEARNERS AT THE GHANA INSTITUTE OF
LANGUAGES**



MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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**A thesis in the Department of Applied Linguistics,
Faculty of Foreign Language Education, submitted to the
School of Graduate Studies, in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the award of degree of
Master of Philosophy
(Teaching English as a Second Language)
in the University of Education, Winneba**

SEPTEMBER, 2023

DECLARATION

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, Elizabeth Rhule, hereby declare that this research was conducted under the keen supervision of Professor Charlotte Fofu Lomotey. I affirm that, aside from the references and citations duly acknowledged in this study, this research has not been submitted in part or whole to any other educational institution for the award of a degree.

Student: Elizabeth Rhule

Signature:

Date: 26th February, 2024

SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I attest that this research was conducted under my supervision from start to finish. I guided the student in the preparation and assembling of the research. The work is original and sources have been acknowledged in that regard.

Supervisor: Prof. Charlotte Fofu Lomotey

Signature:

Date: 26th February, 2024

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my sweet husband, James Francis Ekow Rhule, whose constant mentoring, encouragement, and efforts have resulted in the success of this work, and to the memory of my late brother, James Edu Dadzie.



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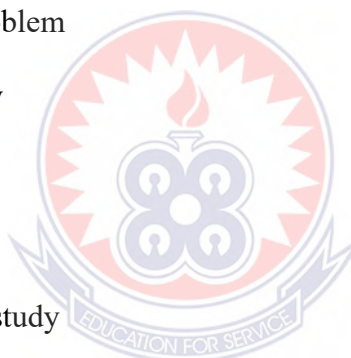
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ABSTRACT

Language learning is an interesting field of research that has attracted several investigations. Vocabulary knowledge is an important element in language acquisition. Not much attention has been paid to vocabulary acquisition of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in second language contexts. As such, this research examines the process of L3 (third language) vocabulary acquisition among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners from a sociocognitive perspective. The study explores the role of sociocognitive factors in the acquisition and development of vocabulary knowledge in a multilingual context. Drawing on relevant theoretical frameworks and empirical research, it investigates the interaction between sociocultural factors, cognitive processes, and individual learner characteristics in L3 vocabulary acquisition. The study adopts a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods, to capture the complexity and variability of learners' experiences. Findings suggest that EFL learners use several approaches such as hybrid strategies (dialogue and mobile apps) and traditional strategies (flashcards and wordlists) which play a crucial role in shaping the vocabulary acquisition process. In addition, learners faced some challenges relating to morphosyntactic structures, phonology, and translation issues. Furthermore, these challenges were a result of classroom factors and teacher-students' personal behaviours (lack of effort and insufficient explanations). The implications of these findings for language instruction and curriculum design are discussed, emphasizing the need for incorporating sociocognitive approaches in supporting EFL learners' vocabulary development in L3 settings. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of L3 vocabulary acquisition and highlights the importance of considering sociocognitive factors in language learning contexts and offers dimensions for further research.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

Language learning in every context involves complex processes that require assistance. Language skills are becoming significant in all aspects of life. These notions afford grounds for the researcher to investigate the vocabulary acquisition of EFL students in Ghana using a socio-cognitive theory. In this chapter, the researcher discusses the general background of the study, reports the problem identified, the purpose of the study and the research objectives and questions.

1.1 Background to the study

Language learning is a lifelong activity that involves constant effort. Crystal (2011) defines language acquisition as a process or the outcome of learning certain patterns of a language and then its general characteristics. It cannot be called an acquisition if the learner is not able to produce meaningful output in a language. To achieve this, they need sounds and words, sentences, and meanings. They need to know what to use, where to use it, and when, how to integrate language with other modes of communication, how to make themselves understood, and how to understand others (Clark, 2016). According to Agyekum (2001), it is difficult to envisage a society without language since it is the medium through which communication is attained. Learning a new language involves substantial vocabulary acquisition (Bartolotti & Maian, 2017). Learning vocabulary is one of the basic communication tools and is often considered by language learners as the most difficult field in language learning (Çelik & Toptaş, 2010).

Vocabulary knowledge is an important element in language acquisition. By learning new words, students can increase their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, and can improve comprehension and production in the language they are learning.

Nassaji (2004) asserts that students who learn the English language as their third language (hereafter L3) have a wider vocabulary knowledge, and make more effective use of certain types of lexical inferencing strategies than their counterparts who have less vocabulary knowledge. Schmitt (2014) and Webb (2007) also posit that English language learners who experienced slow vocabulary development were less able to comprehend texts at the grade level.

González-Fernández and Schmitt (2017) have argued that vocabulary knowledge is often seen as an important tool, not only for first and second language (L1/ L2) learners, but also for L3 learners, as limited L3 vocabulary hinders further language use and communication. Without a broad vocabulary, we cannot communicate clearly using the structures and functions we may have learned. A larger vocabulary enables learners to access richer semantic resources to activate relevant background knowledge and combine new information with existing knowledge for better understanding (McKweon & Curtis, 2014). Despite its importance, vocabulary acquisition has received less attention in Ghana, and unfortunately, there are no studies on English as a foreign language (hereafter referred to as EFL) learners learning English in Ghana.

More importantly, the issue of language transfer has not been applied adequately in the literature surveyed (Falk & Bardel, 2011; Hermas, 2010; Jin, 2009). Generally, crosslinguistic influence by either the L1 or the L2 or both should be considered at each of these levels of investigation in vocabulary acquisition. Further, the increasing interest in L3 research warrants this study to be conducted to inform key theoretical views on how additional (non-native) language knowledge comes to be in the mind/brain of the multilingual speaker (Slabakova, 2016). An additional important concern is how the two (or more) languages already represented in the brain influence each other, and are transferred to a new language (that is the L3). It is against this background that this

research is conducted to explore the vocabulary acquisition of the English language by EFL learners in Ghana.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Generally, some scholars have reported that some language learners come to the learning context with background knowledge through several socio-cultural and linguistic interactions (e.g. Sasaki & Takeuchi, 2010; Williams, 2012). Vocabulary knowledge is often viewed as a critical tool for not only second language learners but third language learners because a limited vocabulary in a third language impedes successful communication. Despite the importance of vocabulary knowledge, there is relatively minimal research conducted on vocabulary acquisition among EFL learners (cf. Naeimi & Foo, 2015; Perez & Ruiz, 2007; Rothman, 2015) and the case is even worse in the Ghanaian context. This presents geographical and empirical gaps that require to be addressed in the study.

Practically, from the researcher's personal experience, EFL learners in the Ghana Institute of Languages (GIL) face challenges in their language skills which are directly related to the central role played by vocabulary acquisition. The challenges associated with vocabulary acquisition manifest in their reading and writing as well. As noted by Appiah-Baidoo (2018), good oral vocabulary (words we use in speaking and listening) is linked directly to later success in reading, and students who have more vocabulary knowledge acquire greater proficiency as well. Aside from this general problem, the researcher reports instances of L1 and L2 transfer to the L3 acquisition which affects their performance (e.g. Hermas, 2014). This pedagogical issue adds to the necessity of the conduct of the study to address the challenges.

Concerning the effect of learners' inability to effectively acquire vocabulary, a limited vocabulary makes it very difficult for learners to understand or express more

complex ideas in the target language. This can severely limit their ability to develop stronger language skills (Nation, 2003). Also, studies link vocabulary knowledge to improved academic performance (Hermas, 2014). It is argued that students with poorer vocabularies tend to score lower on standardized tests as well. Regarding studies on this topic, research has examined the factors that influence EFL vocabulary acquisition. For example, some key findings show the benefits of direct vocabulary instruction, extensive reading, and utilizing vocabulary learning strategies (Zhang & Li, 2021; Lin & Yu, 2015). Further research is warranted to deepen our understanding of effective methods to promote vocabulary gains. This could inform pedagogical practices and curriculum design to better support EFL learners. As vocabulary is a critical component of language proficiency, this research explores how to enhance vocabulary acquisition which offers contribution to the field of language teaching and learning.

While some scholars have stipulated the effectiveness of socio-cultural theory to improve vocabulary acquisition based on the context of learning (e.g. Bonsu, 2021; Karpov, 2018; Lantolf, 2011), others have also reported the prolonged cognitive theory to be influential (e.g. Larsen-Freeman, 2007; Wallace, 2011). The debate on a suitable theory has led to the development of the socio-cognitive theory of language acquisition (Atkinson, 2011; Cheung, 2016; Noshino & Atkinson, 2015). Given the novelty of the theory and the gaps identified, the researcher adopts the socio-cognitive theory to examine the vocabulary acquisition of EFL learners through a convergent parallel design.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this research is to explore the vocabulary acquisition process of EFL learners in the Ghana Institute of Languages using the socio-cognitive theory. This purpose is deduced from the phenomenon of language transfer in language learning by L3 learners. Vocabulary is chosen because it forms an integral part of language learning

given its correspondence with other language skills. Learners need to build a consistent body of terms that are specific to and occur frequently in their area of study.

1.4 Research objectives

Deductively, from the general purpose of the study, the researcher presents three research objectives to guide the study. These research objectives form the basis of the analysis and discussion of the results of the research. Additionally, these research objectives are formulated taking into consideration the limited time and resources available. The objectives are to:

- i. examine how the EFL learners acquire vocabulary skills at the Ghana Institute of Languages;
- ii. investigate the challenges EFL learners encounter in acquiring vocabulary skills at the Ghana Institute of Languages;
- iii. explore the factors that account for the challenges EFL learners encounter in acquiring vocabulary skills at the Ghana Institute of Languages.

1.5 Research questions

The following research questions formulated in this study directly correspond to the research objectives stated in the previous subsection. The research questions are formulated to guide the conduct of the study in answering the research problem. The questions are:

- i. How do the EFL learners acquire vocabulary skills at the Ghana Institute of Languages?
- ii. What challenges do EFL learners encounter in acquiring vocabulary skills at the Ghana Institute of Languages?
- iii. What factors account for the challenges EFL learners encounter in acquiring vocabulary skills at the Ghana Institute of Languages?

1.6 Significance of the study

Generally, every research should offer contributions to knowledge and practice in a specific discipline. That said, the researcher reports the significance of this study to theory and practices through its results. Firstly, the results of the study contribute to language acquisition research in second and foreign language contexts. More importantly, the identified paucity of research in vocabulary acquisition is addressed as the results relate directly to the issue. Secondly, the findings of this research offer pedagogical implications for teaching and learning language, with a focus on vocabulary. Through this study, the researcher offers insights into procedures that are suitable for teaching English language vocabulary. Recent research indicates that teaching vocabulary may be problematic because many teachers are not confident about best practices in vocabulary teaching. Finally, the study contributes to the theory adopted for the research. The socio-cognitive theory is relatively new in language acquisition studies and its application in the research contributes to the literature in the area. Again, the results of the study serve as a source of reference to guide other studies on language acquisition and the adoption of socio-cognitive theory.

1.7 Delimitations

The conduct of this study appears broad. However, in this section, the researcher provides some delimitations to put the study in a better perspective. The delimitations relate to the participants involved in the study, the research methodology adopted, and the subject matter of investigation. Firstly, the researcher delimited the study to involve EFL students from countries other than Ghana. The researcher chose these participants based on the problem under investigation which was of interest. Additionally, based on the researcher's experience, these students have difficulty in vocabulary acquisition which is highly influenced by their first and second language.

Secondly, in the methodology, the researcher delimits the study to use the mixed-method approach. This approach is used based on the purpose of the study and research questions. Specifically, the convergent parallel design is adopted to investigate this topic. This delimitation carves the path for the researcher so that irrelevant methodological information is not included to affect the results of the study. Finally, the study is delimited based on the subject matter or topic. Generally, the subject matter is vocabulary acquisition by EFL students in Ghana. This subject matter is chosen to be investigated because, of all the cases identified, the vocabulary skill of the learners affects the writing, reading and speaking proficiency of the learners. That is, their vocabulary skill is central to their performance in other L3 acquisition aspects. This makes the subject matter worth investigating.

1.8 Organisation of the study

The rest of the thesis is organised as follows: Chapter 2 focuses on the literature review where the theoretical framework adopted is reviewed. Relevant concepts and empirical studies are also presented. In Chapter 3 of the study, the research methodology is discussed. The researcher discusses the research design, approach, sample and sampling techniques. The data collection and analysis procedures are presented as well. Chapter 4 focuses on the analysis and discussion of the data for interpretation. It presents on the strategies they adopt in learning vocabulary such as audio-visual aids. Finally, in Chapter 5, the researcher summarizes the entire study, concludes, and provides recommendations for further research.

1.9 Conclusion

This chapter presented the introduction to the research, where the background of the study, statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, research questions and objectives were discussed. Aside from these, the chapter also discussed how significant

the research is and provided the scope of the study. The next chapter presents the literature review of the research.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the general background of the research. The study was delimited using a theoretical framework. In this regard, this chapter presents a review of related literature to the topic under study. In this chapter, the researcher discusses the theoretical framework that underpins the study and how it is applied in this study. Additionally, the researcher reviews some concepts that help to flesh out the importance of the study. Finally, empirical studies are reviewed to reveal gaps which are addressed by the present study to situate in the network of studies in language acquisition.

2.1 First language acquisition

First language (also known as mother tongue, native language and primary language) is the language which is acquired during early childhood starting before the age of about 3 years is the first language (Sinha et al., 2009). Madisha (2018) extends the duration of acquiring the first language by stating that the first language is a language that babies acquire from birth until about 7 or 8 years old. They can keep learning the language even after those years to master all the idiomatic expressions, sentence structures, and many more areas. According to Yadav (2014), the term ‘mother tongue’ gives the notion that the linguistic skills of a child are honed by the mother and, therefore, the language spoken by the mother would be the primary language that the child would learn. Oluwole (2008) asserts that the identity that we get from speaking our mother tongue is what enforces successful social patterns.

Soderman and Oshio (2008, p. 298) consider first language acquisition as “complex”. The complexity involved in the mother tongue is its foundation for other languages as Clarke (2009) notes. Soderman and Oshio (2008) further add that the

process of becoming competent in a first language requires very young children to master: phonology (the sounds of the language); vocabulary (the words of the language); grammar (the way the words are ordered and put together); discourse (the way the sentences are put together); and pragmatics (the rules of how to use the language). From the composition of Soderman and Oshio (2008), the researcher focuses on the mastery of vocabulary as it forms the basis of the research.

In a multilingual setting like Ghana, the language that a learner acquires first, known as their first language (L1), plays a crucial role in their acquisition of a second or third language. This is because the first language serves as the foundation for language learning and influences various aspects of the learner's linguistic development. One of the positive influences of the first language highlighted by Anyidoho (2009) is its ability to reduce emotional and psychological disruptions that learners may encounter in new contexts. When learners are introduced to a new language, they often experience feelings of confusion, frustration, and even anxiety. However, having a solid foundation in their first language can provide a sense of familiarity and security, easing the transition into acquiring a new language. Additionally, the first language provides learners with cognitive and linguistic resources that can facilitate the acquisition of a second or third language. The knowledge and skills developed in the first language, such as vocabulary, grammar, and communication strategies, can be transferred and applied to the new language learning process. This transfer of skills, known as language transfer or cross-linguistic influence, can positively impact vocabulary acquisition, grammatical development, and overall language proficiency.

Anyidoho (2009), thus, argues that communicating and teaching new things in an unknown language destabilize learners and reinforce their negative feelings. Therefore, the use of the learner's first language in the initial stages promotes a smooth transition

from home to school and facilitates the learning process. As such, it is deducible that the L1 promotes the acquisition of the L2 and L3. Hence, Anyidoho (2009) argues that the high level of competence in the L1 that learners bring to school is therefore important if they are required to express their feelings and views.

In the realm of vocabulary acquisition, the similarity between words in a learner's mother tongue and the target language can have a significant impact on the ease or difficulty of learning the target language. When there are a large number of words that are similar or identical between the two languages, it can facilitate the learning process and make it easier for language learners to acquire new vocabulary. The presence of cognates, which are words that have a similar form and meaning across different languages, can be particularly advantageous for vocabulary acquisition. When learners encounter cognates in the target language that resemble words in their mother tongue, they can draw upon their existing knowledge and make connections between the two languages. This prior knowledge serves as a foundation for understanding and memorizing new words, as learners can leverage their familiarity with the cognates to infer meanings, pronunciation, and even grammatical patterns.

2.2 Second language acquisition

According to Ellis (1997), a second language is a foreign language not spoken by the indigenous people of a certain place or the native country of a person but is learnt usually in a formal setting. Second language acquisition is needed for education, employment and other purposes, and it is typically an official or societal language (Agyekum, 2017). Usually, second languages are languages that are prestigious and powerful and therefore dominant globally. This makes them have a lot of speakers which influences other speakers to learn and use the language to be able to communicate with the outside world.

Second language (L2) acquisition has always been a difficult area for language learners and a hot topic for second language researchers. It has established links with other various fields of inquiry, such as composition studies, applied linguistics, teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL), foreign language education, and bilingual education, among others. Over the last 50 years, the number of inquiries into L2 acquisition issues has grown rapidly and produced fruitful results.

Yeboah (2014) asserts that one finds that cuts through almost all of the studies done on language acquisition and learning reveal that several countries in Africa have adopted English as their second language. As such, it is the medium of instruction in their educational systems for reasons such as its global function and the many advantages it has in terms of business, commerce and general communication. Gass (2013) argues that the term ‘second language (L2) is often used to refer to all the languages that are learned after the first/native language, regardless of whether that language is the second, third, fourth, or fifth. The term second language acquisition, based on Gass’s perspective, implies something broader than just learning a second language. The perspective of Gass blurs some necessary concepts in distinguishing learners and the functions a language play for them.

According to Ortega (2014), second language acquisition (SLA) is “the human capacity to learn languages other than the first, during late childhood, adolescence or adulthood, and once the first language or languages have been acquired”. As has been stated before, it is common that learners to find a helping hand in their first languages to understand better the new system being acquired. Rothman (2015) declares that in learning L3, the L2 takes on a significantly stronger role than the L1 in the initial stages of the L3. It appears that students prefer to pick up chunks of the L2 and apply them in

the L3 vocabulary acquisition. Second language acquisition results in native-like use of the target language, while foreign language learning does not.

2.3 Foreign (Third) language acquisition

In recent years, there has been increasing recognition of the importance of multilingualism and the acquisition of third languages (L3). Traditionally, language acquisition research focused on the acquisition of a second language (L2) in addition to the native language (L1). However, with globalization and the interconnectedness of societies, Hammarberg (2009) reveals that individuals are frequently engaging with multiple languages, leading to the emergence of the concept of L3 acquisition. The term L3 refers to a non-native language that an individual is acquiring while already having proficiency in two other languages, typically their native language (L1) and a second language (L2). This situation presents unique challenges and opportunities for language learners. The acquisition of an L3 is influenced by the learner's previous language learning experiences, as well as their linguistic and cognitive abilities. One key aspect of L3 acquisition is the potential transfer of skills and knowledge from both the L1 and L2 to the L3 learning process. Learners can draw upon their existing linguistic resources, including vocabulary, grammar, and communication strategies when acquiring the L3. The transfer of skills from L1 and L2 can facilitate the learning process and provide a foundation for building new language proficiency

Any foreign language teaching and learning aims to develop the competence of foreign language learners to make them competent in establishing successful communication (Al-Dersi, 2013). This means looking at the elements for increasing communication competence is important. Grammar, vocabulary, listening, reading, and so on can increase learners' communication competence. However, vocabulary learning could be an important element while teaching and learning another language. This

assertion aligns with the identified research problem that requires exploration to contribute to knowledge and practice.

During the acquisition of the L3 and since learners have their previous languages as references, they are more likely to select and produce certain characteristics that look similar to them in those languages and overuse them because they think they are well done used, which may be or not (Krevelj, 2013). Cenoz (2011) notices that third language learners can use this broader linguistic repertoire when learning a third language. For instance, they can relate new structures, new vocabulary or new ways of expressing communicative functions to the two languages they already know. Łyda and Szcześniak (2014) note that third language learners have a higher level of language awareness than L2 learners. Consequently, multilingual learners might be assumed to analyse not only their learning and production, but also their attrition, and to use strategies of counterbalancing it (Łyda & Szcześniak, 2014).

The possible influence of an L1 or L2 in the vocabulary acquisition of an L3 has been attributed to cross-linguistic features. Madlener (2015) explains that cross-linguistic influences may be due to the overall typological proximity or distance of the languages involved in the acquisition context. For this reason, L3 learners who have other languages, other than English, as L2 are more exposed to the cross-linguistic phenomena than learners who are acquiring two languages from different contexts. Brunner (2017) points out that the connections in structure and typology that two or more languages share increase the chances of the cross-linguistic phenomenon.

2.4 Vocabulary acquisition

Vocabulary learning has long been considered one of the essential components for developing language learning. Nagy and Scott (2000) suggested that vocabulary knowledge is equally multidimensional and complex; knowing a word well requires a

combination of different types of knowledge: its definition, its relationship to other words, its connotations in different contexts (i.e., polysemy), and its transformation into other morphological forms. Ur (1998) defines vocabulary as the words we teach in a foreign language. Webb (2009) takes vocabulary from the student's perspective by stating that is the stock of words used by a person. Generally, vocabulary learning is an essential part of foreign language learning as the meanings of new words are very often emphasized, whether in books or classrooms (Alqhatani, 2015). Kamil and Hiebert (2005) define vocabulary as the knowledge of words and words' meaning. More specifically, we use vocabulary to refer to the kind of words that students must know and to use the new words.

Without vocabulary, nothing can be conveyed (Alqahtani, 2015). It is also central to language teaching and is of paramount importance to a language learner. Vocabulary acquisition provides an important foundation for later reading comprehension, writing, speaking and academic success (Biemiller, 2003; Wang, Christ & Chiu, 2013). Teaching words is a crucial aspect of learning a language as languages are based on words (Thornbury, 2002). Nonetheless, vocabulary acquisition in foreign language learning has received little attention in the field of research (Alkurtehe & Dzakiria, 2018). Vocabulary knowledge is often viewed as a critical tool for not only second language learners but third language learners because a limited vocabulary in a third language impedes successful communication. Underscoring the importance of vocabulary acquisition, Schmitt (2000) emphasizes that "lexical knowledge is central to communicative competence and the acquisition of a second language" (p. 55). Nation (2001) further describes the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and language use as complementary: knowledge of vocabulary enables language use and, conversely,

language use leads to an increase in vocabulary knowledge. This assertion is also supported by Ahmadian and Tajabadi (2017).

Gu (2003), Susanto (2017), and Nation (2011) have realised that the acquisition of vocabulary is essential for successful second and third language use and plays an important role in the formation of complete spoken and written texts. In English as a second language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, vocabulary items play a vital role in all language skills that as listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Nation, 2011). McKeown and Curtis (2014), furthermore, argue that the acquisition of an adequate vocabulary is essential for successful language use. This is because, without an extensive vocabulary, we cannot use the structures and functions we may have learned for comprehensible communication. From the researcher's experience, L3 learners rely heavily on vocabulary knowledge and the lack of that knowledge is the main and the largest obstacle for them to overcome.

Along with other skills and components, vocabulary is one of the central points in learning a language. Words are the building blocks of a language (Du et al., 2022) and as put forward by McCarthy (1992) "without words to express a wider range of meanings, communication in L3 just cannot happen in any meaningful way" (p.50). Vocabulary has been gradually recognised as crucial to language acquisition and use in which insufficient vocabulary knowledge of the learners leads to difficulties in third language learning. In this regard, McCarten (2007, p. 7) believes that vocabulary acquisition is "arguably the most critical component of successful language learning". Additionally, while only adult learners have been the target of many interaction studies, EFL learners have been under-addressed. Vocabulary acquisition plays a significant role for language learners (Cameron, 2001) and vocabulary development has been regarded as a key aspect of the language development of learners (Linse & Nunan, 2005).

Vocabulary size is also predictive of morphological awareness (i.e., understanding of principles that guide the way morphemes are combined to form words) (Hemphill & Tivnan, 2008), which in turn will contribute to the expansion of vocabulary. Larger vocabularies enable learners to access richer semantic resources to activate relevant background knowledge and integrate new information with existing knowledge, which leads to better comprehension (Ford-Connors & Paratore, 2015). Research has shown that vocabulary knowledge assists with critical literacy skills, such as letter-sound knowledge (McDowell et al., 2007). Research has highlighted the necessity of repeated exposure to vocabulary words, explicit instruction on learning strategies, and sufficient time to engage with new words to close vocabulary gaps between students (Ganske, 2018). Thus, vocabulary instruction must constitute an integral component of every language learning program (Moody et al., 2018).

In the realm of language learning, vocabulary acquisition holds a crucial position in the development of proficiency in a third language (L3). Researchers and language educators have recognized the significance of vocabulary in language mastery and its impact on effective communication. When learners embark on foreign language journeys, they often prioritize the use of dictionaries over grammar books. This observation, highlighted by Alqhatani (2015), underscores the practical importance of vocabulary acquisition in L3 learning. Dictionaries serve as valuable tools for learners to access and expand their vocabulary repertoire, allowing them to understand and express themselves in the target language. The assertion by González-Fernández and Schmitt (2017) that a large vocabulary is essential for language mastery further emphasizes the crucial role of vocabulary in L3 acquisition. Vocabulary knowledge encompasses not only individual words but also their meanings, collocations, and usage in various contexts. Proficiency in vocabulary enables learners to comprehend written and spoken

texts, engage in meaningful conversations, and effectively convey their thoughts and ideas. However, EFL learners often face challenges in acquiring an extensive vocabulary in their L3. Unlike other aspects of language such as grammar, semantics, and phonology, vocabulary acquisition does not follow a set of rigid rules or structures that learners can simply memorize or apply. Vocabulary development requires exposure to words in authentic contexts, repeated encounters with new terms, and active engagement in using and practising vocabulary in meaningful ways.

Zimmerman (2007) explained the meaning of vocabulary as the set of words that are the basic building blocks used in the generation and understanding of a sentence. For a learner to become competent in the formation and easy understanding of sentences, then that person needs the basic skills in understanding the meaning of new words and how the new words are used in sentences. These skills of understanding the meaning of new words and their usage in sentence formation can be properly achieved through vocabulary instruction in the English language. There can be no complete understanding without the existence of words, serving as the basic building blocks.

Teachers and students agree that the acquisition of vocabulary is a central factor in teaching a language (Walters, 2004). Teaching vocabulary is one of the most discussed parts of teaching English as a foreign language (Alqhatani, 2015). In this regard, the researcher contends that teachers should be concerned that teaching vocabulary is something new and different from students' native language which is the L1. Several approaches have been devised o teaching vocabulary such as using objects (Takač & Singleton, 2008), contrastive pairs (Alqhatani, 2015; Wang, 2020), expressions and gestures (Gullberg, 2008; Tellier, 2007), guessing from context (Walters, 2004), and translation (Alroe & Reinders, 2015; Augustyn, 2013). These notwithstanding, vocabulary acquisition is still a challenge for EFL learners which creates a research gap

for the conduct of this research. Vocabulary learning strategies need to be used for vocabulary learning to take place effectively. The use of vocabulary learning strategies facilitates vocabulary learning and increases student achievement. Each student uses a different strategy in line with their own needs.

2.5 Vocabulary learning strategies

It has been established that vocabulary is central to language and is of great significance to language learners. It has been suggested that teaching vocabulary should not only consist of teaching specific words but also aim at equipping learners with strategies necessary to expand their vocabulary knowledge (Morin & Goebel, 2001). Vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) are defined as actions that learners take to help themselves understand and remember vocabulary. These may include the use of dictionaries, guessing meaning from context, and analyzing affixes and roots. The use of a monolingual dictionary should be recommended. I will adopt the following as a working definition for vocabulary learning strategy: knowledge about the mechanisms (processes, strategies) used to learn vocabulary as well as steps or actions taken by students (a) to find out the meaning of unknown words, (b) to retain them in long-term memory, (c) to recall them at will, and (d) to use them in the oral or written mode.

Vocabulary learning strategies are one part of language learning strategies, which are part of general learning strategies (Nation, 2001). Language learning strategies encourage greater overall self-direction for learners. Self-directed learners are independent learners who are capable of assuming responsibility for their own learning and gradually gaining confidence, involvement and proficiency. This in turn makes strategy instruction an essential part of any foreign or second language program. There are several taxonomies proposed by scholars (Gu & Johnson, 1996; Nation, 2001; Schmitt, 1997) to categorize vocabulary learning strategies. This research uses Schmitt's

(1997) classification of strategies. This classification is adopted because, while being holistic, it accounts for individual performance, which tracks learners' progress in using the strategy. Also, the components within the taxonomy align with the theory adopted for the research.

A comprehensive inventory of vocabulary learning strategies is developed by Schmitt (1997). He distinguishes the strategies into two groups: The ones to determine the meaning of new words when encountered for the first time, and the ones to consolidate meaning when encountered again. The former contains determination and social strategies and the latter contains cognitive, metacognitive, memory and social strategies. Schmitt includes social strategies in both categories since they can be used for both purposes. To Schmitt, determination strategies are used when "learners are faced with discovering a new word's meaning without recourse to another person's experience" (p. 205). Hence, learners try to discover the meaning of a new word by guessing it with the help of context, structural knowledge of the language, and reference materials.

For Schmitt, the second way to discover a new meaning is through employing the social strategy of asking someone for help with unknown words. Besides the initial discovery of a word, learners need to employ a variety of strategies to practice and retain vocabulary. Learners thus, use a variety of social, memory, cognitive and metacognitive strategies to consolidate their vocabulary knowledge. Cooperative group learning through which learners study and practice the meaning of new words in a group is an instance of social strategy for consolidating a word. Memory strategies, traditionally known as Mnemonics, involve relating the word with some previously learned knowledge by using some form of imagery or grouping.

Cognitive strategies in this taxonomy are similar to memory strategies but are not focused on manipulative mental processing. They include repetition and using mechanical means such as word lists, flashcards, and vocabulary notebooks to study words. Finally, metacognitive strategies in Schmitt's taxonomy are defined as strategies used by learners to control and evaluate their learning, by having an overview of the learning process in general. Testing oneself is an instance of a metacognitive strategy which provides "input to the effectiveness of one's choice of learning strategies, providing positive reinforcement if progress is being made or a signal to switch strategies if it is not" (Schmitt, 1997, p. 216). In conclusion, while learning new vocabulary can be a challenge for foreign language students, it is possible to overcome this challenge by equipping them with a range of vocabulary learning strategies. Teachers play a crucial role in identifying learners' needs, providing targeted training, and creating a supportive learning environment. By incorporating effective vocabulary learning strategies into their language instruction, teachers can empower learners to enhance their vocabulary acquisition skills and ultimately improve their overall language proficiency.

2.6 Theoretical framework

This portion of the study presents a review of the theory that underpins the research. Here, the researcher briefly reviews the socio-cultural and cognitive theories of language acquisition. Afterwards, the researcher dovetails in to draw on their synergy leading to the socio-cognitive theory which is the main theory in this study. Generally, the researcher further provides justifications for the use of the socio-cognitive theory of language learning.

2.6.1 Socio-cultural theory of language learning

Vygotsky's (1978, 1981) Socio-cultural theory (hereafter, SCT) views learning as an active process through which knowledge is constructed. The core principle of SCT

is that “human psychological processes are mediated by psychological tools such as language, signs and symbols” (Karpov, 2018, p. 27). The signs and symbols are constructed in words which form the vocabulary of a particular language. Lantolf (2011) opines that language’s power resides in its meaning-making capacity through mediation. I agree because the semantic relevance of a vocabulary of an acquired representation through a social interaction establishes a means of acting.

According to Lantolf (2011), language is fundamentally a social activity that involves interaction between individuals. In the context of vocabulary acquisition, this interaction takes place between the learner ("I") and others ("You") as they engage in communicative exchanges. This perspective emphasizes the importance of social interaction in the process of learning and acquiring vocabulary. Language learners often rely on their first language (L1) as the medium through which they think and express their thoughts. When they are required to use a second language (L2) in academic tasks, such as vocabulary acquisition exercises, they face a challenge in adapting to the new social context and producing language in the target language. The change in social context from using the L1 to the L2 poses challenges for learners in their vocabulary acquisition efforts. They need to navigate the unfamiliar linguistic and cultural norms of the L2, which can affect their ability to produce accurate and meaningful vocabulary. This shift requires learners to develop new strategies for expressing their thoughts and ideas in the L2. Additionally, the social aspect of language acquisition highlights the importance of interaction and communication in the learning process. Through interactions with others, learners have opportunities to practice and reinforce their vocabulary acquisition skills. These social interactions can take various forms, such as engaging in conversations, participating in group activities, or collaborating on vocabulary tasks.

The Socio-cultural theory as a theoretical lens has expanded enduring influence in L2 development and has taken hold as one of the alternative approaches to language acquisition currently (Xu & Zhang, 2019). Learning, which is an active social process, occurs through an interaction between the teacher and learner pivoted on language usage. Lantolf and Thorne (2006) and Swain and Watanabe (2013) have demonstrated that this theory can be applied to language acquisition. Vygotsky (1978) posited that human learning cannot be understood independently from the social and cultural forces that influence individuals; and that, sociocultural interactions are critical to learning. This theory offers an important space for the teacher and student to interact. This active interaction helps in the development of skills and learners' progress toward their potential level (Gee, 2000). Interaction in the language learning process offers several opportunities that help the learners to increase their vocabulary acquisition (Ellis & He, 1999). The theory captures some key components which are the zone of proximal development and mediating tools (Storch, 2018). The development of skills that the researcher conceptualizes in this study as vocabulary skill occurs in what Vygotsky termed the zone of proximal development (hereinafter, ZPD).

Vygotsky (1978, p. 86) defines the ZPD as “the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers”. Collaborative learning, guided by teachers or peers who have achieved a higher level of proficiency, can be a valuable approach to support vocabulary acquisition among learners at lower levels of achievement. This approach aligns with the sociocultural theory, which emphasizes the role of social interaction and collaboration in the learning process. Teachers and peers who have achieved a higher level of achievement in vocabulary acquisition can serve as guides,

mentors, and sources of support for learners who are at a lower level. They can share their knowledge, strategies, and experiences, providing valuable insights and guidance to help struggling learners improve their vocabulary skills. In a collaborative learning setting, learners can engage in joint activities and tasks that promote active participation, cooperation, and peer interaction. They can work together on vocabulary exercises, engage in discussions, and engage in group projects that require the application and use of vocabulary in meaningful contexts. Through collaboration, learners can benefit from the diverse perspectives, knowledge, and expertise of their peers. They can learn from each other, exchange ideas, and provide support and feedback. This collaborative approach creates a supportive and interactive learning environment that fosters motivation, engagement, and a sense of community among learners.

According to Martinez (2010, p. 14), the ZPD “recognizes that individuals often exhibit higher levels of skill through assistance and encouragement”. However, the researcher is of the view that with the help of, most importantly teachers, students can increase their vocabulary acquisition skills to a more advanced level. The concept of assistance in language learning is indeed crucial, as it plays a significant role in supporting learners to acquire new skills and knowledge. The idea that learners can gradually transition from relying on assistance to becoming independent learners is in line with the zone of proximal development (ZPD) theory proposed by Lev Vygotsky. According to Vygotsky (1978), the zone of proximal development refers to the gap between what learners can do independently and what they can achieve with appropriate guidance and support. Assistance in the ZPD can take various forms, such as scaffolding, modeling, feedback, and collaborative learning experiences (Barnard & Campbell, 2005). These forms of assistance aim to bridge the gap between learners’ current abilities and their potential development. When learners receive assistance, whether, from

teachers, peers, or learning resources, they are provided with the necessary guidance, explanations, and examples to help them understand and navigate through challenging language tasks (Barnard & Campbell, 2005). This assistance helps learners to grasp new concepts, develop language skills, and expand their vocabulary knowledge.

Another key construct in socio-cultural theory is the mediating tools of language acquisition. Vygotsky's fundamental claim is that human cognitive development is mediated by culturally constructed means or tools (Storch, 2018). The researcher contends that these tools can be material such as vocabulary postcards or symbolic such as gestures signifying a particular word. The tools facilitate and shape actions, including the regulation of the language learners' thinking processes. For example, language, a symbolic tool, enables interaction between the expert and the novice. As such, it becomes a requisite for the learners to acquire some vocabulary to engage in integration.

The researcher agrees with Costino and Hyon (2011) on the assertion that the socio-cultural theory in language acquisition is more pragmatic; in that, it steers learners toward meeting their immediate needs such as understanding tasks or assignments and using appropriate vocabularies, involved in completing their academic tasks. Studies such as those conducted by Chervona and Mustafina (2016), Juffs and Friedline (2014), and Lantolf et al. (2015) have explored the application of socio-cultural theory in language learning, including vocabulary acquisition. These studies highlight the importance of social interactions, collaborative learning, and meaningful communication in promoting vocabulary development. From a socio-cultural perspective, the notion of development takes into consideration the changes that occur as learners interact with their environment and receive assistance from others. The assistance provided by teachers, peers, or more knowledgeable individuals plays a crucial role in supporting learners' vocabulary acquisition. Through interactions, Chervona and Mustafina (2016) observe

that learners receive guidance, feedback, and opportunities for practice, which contribute to their linguistic development. The context of learning is also significant in vocabulary acquisition. The learning environment, the social interactions, and the cultural factors surrounding the learners can shape their vocabulary learning experiences. For example, engaging in authentic and meaningful conversations with native speakers or using vocabulary in real-world contexts can enhance learners' understanding and retention of new words. Similarly, cultural aspects, such as exposure to culturally relevant materials or discussions, can provide learners with the necessary context to grasp the meaning and usage of vocabulary items.

Language acquisition researchers have developed the sociocultural theory to emphasize the importance of language to social and cultural interactions (Perry, 2012). Barnard and Campbell (2005, p. 85) state that “teachers need to be provided with an appropriate theoretical foundation - as well as technical expertise – both before embarking on, and implementing, an innovative approach to teaching writing”. In this sense, the researcher is of the view that vocabulary acquisition should form a core portion of the curriculum design in language acquisition (Nation, 2013) and not be a peripheral aspect to help develop the learners and not just be a one-time activity issued from teacher to the learner for an immediate effect to fulfil an immediate task.

Long (2017) contends that SCT adds to the proliferation of theories in second language learning which blurs the applicability of a genuine framework for examining language acquisition in other contexts. Slavkov (2015) also states that the theory has become multifaceted, hence losing its robust application in language learning research. Although Alkurtehe and Dzakiria (2018) and Rogoff (2003) contend that SCT is paramount for studying vocabulary development, the absence of cognitive processes affects storing and reconstruction of other words (Alqahtani, 2015; Gass et al., 2020)

which makes it more demanding to find an appropriate strategy to develop learners' vocabulary (Al-Shuwairakh, 2001; Saigh & Schmitt, 2012).

To summarize, from a sociocultural perspective, vocabulary skill is a complex, mediated, distributed, process of discovery and invention (Naeimi & Foo, 2015). This follows morphological processes. From the review, the researcher identifies that SCT was not originally developed to study second language acquisition (Newman & Holzman, 2014), however, following several studies, the theory has been adapted and suited to second language research. This provides solid ground for the researcher to test the primary theory adopted for this research from a third language perspective. Following the criticism levelled against the socio-cultural theory of language acquisition, the cognitive theory was developed.

2.6.2 Cognitive theory of language learning

Mainstream theories of language learning are classically cognitivist (Atkinson, 2011). Fundamentally, Omar (2020) hints that the cognitive theory is based mainly on Chomsky's Universal Grammar Theory, where the mind is central to all language-related processes. Cognitivism as a theory of language learning studies the process that occurs inside the learner's mind and has its own history about how it happens or its development of it. Atkinson (2011) defines cognitivism as a theory that envisages the mind as the necessary and sufficient locus of human thought and learning; and such thought and learning is a form of information processing (Wallace, 2007). The language learner is constantly engaged in a thinking activity during the process.

From a cognitive perspective, language acquisition is seen as a complex cognitive process involving the mental processes of perception, attention, memory, and reasoning. While acknowledging the social and interactive aspects of language, cognitive approaches focus on the internal cognitive mechanisms and processes that underlie

language learning and the acquisition of new linguistic knowledge. Language as a "social semiotic" refers to its function as a system of signs and symbols used for communication and meaning-making within a social context. Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) emphasize the social nature of language, highlighting how it is used to convey social and cultural meaning. However, cognitive perspectives emphasize that language is not solely a social phenomenon but also a cognitive product. Atkinson (2011) suggests that language development is primarily driven by cognitive processes, such as perception, memory, and problem-solving abilities.

In the field of language acquisition, researchers have increasingly adopted cognitive perspectives to understand how learners acquire new linguistic knowledge. Approaches such as cognitive-interactionist theory (Long, 2007), cognitive linguistics (Ellis, 1997), and the involvement load hypothesis (Larsen-Freeman, 2007) emphasize the role of cognitive processes in language learning. Cognitive-interactionist theory, proposed by Long (2007), emphasizes the interaction between cognitive processes and social interaction in language acquisition. It suggests that learners engage in cognitive activities such as attention, noticing, and processing input during social interactions, leading to the acquisition of new linguistic knowledge. Cognitive linguistics, as discussed by Ellis (1997), explores how language reflects cognitive structures and processes. It investigates the cognitive mechanisms involved in language learning, such as categorization, metaphorical thinking, and prototype formation. This perspective highlights the importance of understanding the cognitive principles underlying language acquisition. The involvement load hypothesis, proposed by Larsen-Freeman (2007), suggests that the level of cognitive involvement in processing language input affects the learning outcome. It emphasizes that learners benefit from engaging in cognitively challenging tasks that require deep processing of language input.

Cognitive theorists see language acquisition, as the building up of knowledge systems that can eventually be called automatically for speaking and understanding. In this sense, language learning is a holistic process and cannot be interpreted as stimulus-response associations. Language learners are cautious to understand and develop or produce all aspects of the language. So, step by step, through experience and practice, they can use other parts of their knowledge. Briefly, the cognitivist asserts that language acquisition can be achieved automatically. Cognition and language create each other. Language has come to represent the world as we know it; it is grounded in our perceptual experience. Language is used to organize, process, and convey information, from one person to another, from one embodied mind to another. Learning a language involves determining structure from usage and this, like learning about all other aspects of the world, involves the full scope of cognition: the remembering of utterances and episodes, the categorization of experience, the determination of patterns among and between stimuli, the generalization of conceptual schema and prototypes from exemplars, and the use of cognitive models, of metaphors, analogies, and images in thinking.

A host of studies across academic disciplines have examined the influence of second language acquisition on individuals' cognitive abilities. Collectively, they have demonstrated that bilingualism, or even simply the act of studying a foreign language, affords individuals significant and measurable cognitive benefits. The preeminent foreign-language academic organization in the United States, the *American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages* (2011), cites 63 studies on its website that indicate cognitive gains originating from second language acquisition. Language is used to focus the listener's attention on the world; it can foreground different elements in the theatre of consciousness to potentially relate many different stories and perspectives about the

same scene. What is attended is learned, and so attention controls the acquisition of language itself.

Learning means extracting perceptual cues from the environment and processing them so that they become representations (Atkinson, 2011). In this light, language acquisition becomes decontextualized and abstract in the cognitive framework. Relating this principle to vocabulary acquisition, I am of the view that learning leads to reconstituting of particular mental-linguistic representations, or improvement in metacognitive revising techniques (Ferris, 2010). On this note, learning vocabulary has been preponderantly a cognitive activity: we input text, process and out it. In the cognitive theory, Randaccio (2013) states that language acquisition is perceived as problem-solving, making, thinking, and processing key terms in this regard.

While the socio-cultural theory emphasizes the significance of the learning context in language acquisition, the cognitive theory focuses on the individual learner's cognitive processes and mental representations (Davis, 1995). The cognitive perspective recognizes that language acquisition involves the learner's internal cognitive mechanisms, such as memory, attention, and problem-solving. By separating the mind of the learner from the learning environment, cognitive theories tend to view language acquisition as a cognitive process that can be analyzed using mathematical and mechanistic models (Davis, 1995). This approach emphasizes the role of cognitive structures, processes, and strategies in language learning. Researchers employing cognitive theories aim to understand how learners acquire, store, and retrieve linguistic knowledge and how they process language input (Cook & Seidlhofer, 1995).

However, it is important to note that language acquisition is a complex phenomenon influenced by various factors, including social, cultural, and individual variables. While the cognitive perspective offers valuable insights into the cognitive

processes involved in language learning, it should not be seen as the sole approach to language acquisition (Cook & Seidlhofer, 1995). Other perspectives, such as socio-cultural and interactionist theories, emphasize the social and interactive aspects of language learning, highlighting the role of social interaction, cultural context, and collaborative learning. It is true that cognitive approaches have received significant attention and have been dominant in language acquisition research and teaching methodologies. This dominance can be attributed to the focus on internal cognitive processes, the emphasis on cognitive strategies and problem-solving, and the development of computational models to explain language learning (Atkinson, 2011; Cook & Seidlhofer, 1995). However, it is important to consider a holistic approach that takes into account the socio-cultural, cognitive, and interactionist perspectives to gain a comprehensive understanding of language acquisition.

Myles (2013) contends that SCT and cognitive theory appear contradictory at first sight but they can be reconciled in so far as they are concerned with language acquisition which is a complex process as its pedagogy over the years (Bligh, 2014). The complexity of acquiring a new language is acknowledged in these theories. Cognitive theorists pursue abstractness as a value because they assume that knowledge can stand alone, be available and be transferable across bounded minds and contexts. By contrast, socio-cultural theorists pursue situatedness, sharing a deliberate choice to emphasize knowledge and learning as parts enmeshed in greater wholes (Larsen-Freeman, 2011; Ortega, 2011). However, after pinpointing their constructs, weaknesses and strengths, the study presents the socio-cognitive theory of language acquisition in the next subsection. This theory forms the core basis for the conduct of the research.

2.6.3 Socio-cognitive theory of language learning

In this portion of the theoretical review, the researcher focuses on the socio-cognitive theory which grounds the research. After the researcher has discussed the basic assumptions, she proceeds to review the principles within the theory which are adapted to the research. It must be acknowledged that the review of the theory is done in tandem with insights into vocabulary acquisition in L3. Following the review of the initial theories, the researcher focuses on the socio-cognitive theory as the primary theory which is applied to the conduct of the research. According to Flower (1994), “neither social nor cognitive theory makes genuine sense without the other” (p. 33). The pros and cons of each of the theories necessitated their amalgamation to form a socio-cognitive theory. It considers the socio-cultural context, thinking patterns, and expectations of a learner. Cheung (2016) postulates that it is a comparatively strategic approach to language acquisition, which highlights the importance of explaining the purpose of language learning to the students in terms of social impact.

There are two broad conceptualizations of the socio-cognitive theory: Bandura’s approach and Atkinson’s approach. Albert Bandura’s social cognitive theory is a theory that connects behaviourist and cognitive learning theories. This theory assumes that people can pay attention to others through observation, reinforcement, and modelling to learn new information and behaviour (Bandura, 2001). This theory is often a bridge between behaviourist and cognitive learning theories because it contains attention, memory, and motivation. Bandura assumes that direct reinforcement cannot explain all types of learning. Therefore, in his theory, he added a social element: people can learn new information and behaviour by paying attention to other people (Ilmiani et al., 2021).

Social cognitive theory is based on the idea that we learn from interactions with other people in social settings. In addition, by observing the behaviour of others, people

can develop similar behaviours (Ilmiani et al., 2021). After observing the behaviour of others, people will assimilate and imitate the behaviour, especially if the experience of observation is positive and related to the observed behaviour. When behaviour is modelled by someone else, that other person can be called a model, and the whole process is called modelling (Martin, 2004). Thus, modelling includes simple imitation of one person by another and includes more thorough identification processes, in which one tries to become the same person as another. While Bandura's approach to socio-cognitive learning is appreciated, the present research adopts that of Atkinson's which is further elaborated below. Figure 2.6.3.1 presents Bandura's framework of Socio-Cognitive theory which is usually used to study agency and is less applicable in language acquisition research.

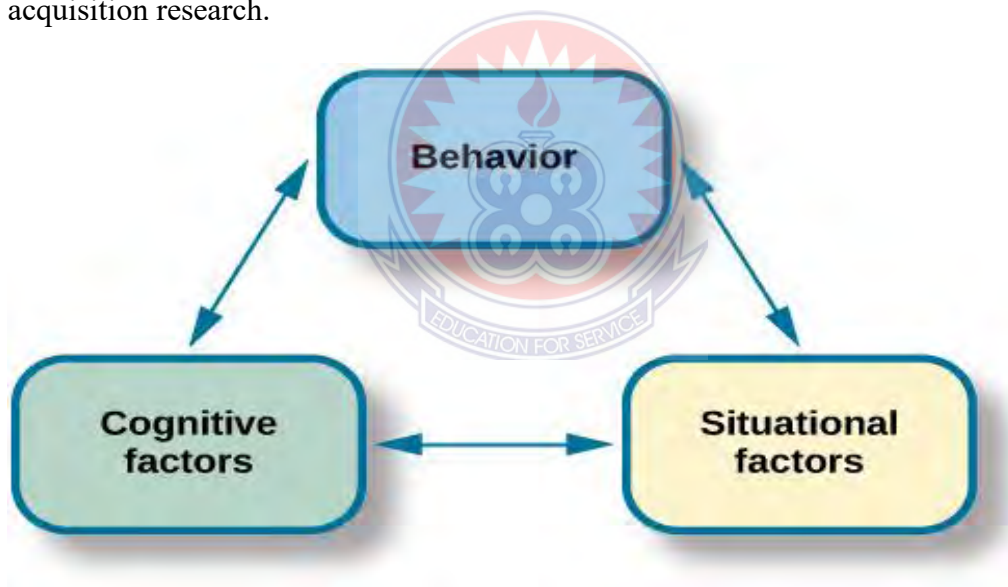


Figure 2.6.3.1. Socio-cognitive framework (Bandura, 1989)

Chandrasekaran (2013) uses the term socio-cognitive as a concept which brings together elements of cognitive process models and social-cultural views in language acquisition. The term *socio-cognitive* has been used as a term that “brings together elements of cognitive models and socio-cultural views to writing” (Chandrasekaran, 2013, p. 103). The term ‘socio-cognitive’ is proposed by Atkinson as the hybrid of the social and the cognitive (Matsuoka et al., 2004). The theory breaks the dichotomy

between social and mental. Atkinson (2014, 2011a, 2011b) has made considerable contributions to the birth and development of the socio-cognitive theory. According to Atkinson (2011a), the main claim of the socio-cognitive theory is based on the integrative function of the mind, body, and eco-social world (i.e., the environment of learning). He further opines that the theory views language acquisition as a natural and adaptive process of alignment.

Recent research has highlighted the significance of the embodied nature of cognition and its impact on language acquisition. Empirical evidence supports the idea that bodily states, bodily orientation, and emotions play a crucial role in cognitive processes, including language learning. This perspective suggests that cognitive development is closely intertwined with embodied action and that the mechanisms underlying cognition are fundamentally shaped by the interaction between the mind, body, and environment. According to Atkinson (2010), Barsalou (2008), Clark (1997), and Gibbs (2005), the embodiment of cognitive processes implies that the mind is not separate from the body but rather interacts with it in a given context. This has important implications for language acquisition, particularly in relation to vocabulary skill development. When learning vocabulary, the learner's mind and body work in tandem, and the classroom environment becomes a crucial context for this process. The physical sensations, bodily movements, and emotional states experienced by learners can impact their engagement, attention, and memory. For example, studies have shown that incorporating physical actions and gestures while learning new words enhances memory and retrieval (Goldin-Meadow, 2003; Kelly et al., 2010). This suggests that involving the body in the learning process can facilitate vocabulary acquisition by creating embodied connections between words and their meanings.

Furthermore, the situated nature of language acquisition acknowledges that learning occurs within a specific context. The classroom environment, with its social interactions, instructional materials, and linguistic input, shapes the learner's experiences and influences their understanding and use of vocabulary. The context provides learners with opportunities to engage in meaningful language use, negotiate meaning, and apply newly acquired vocabulary in relevant communicative tasks. Metaphorically, the learner's mind can be seen as correlated with their metaphorical body situated in the language acquisition classroom. This metaphorical body represents the learner's physical presence, sensory experiences, and bodily actions within the learning context. The embodied nature of cognition suggests that the learner's interactions with the language and the classroom environment are not purely cognitive but involve a holistic integration of sensory, motor, and affective processes.

The theory acknowledges the centrality of cognition to language acquisition (Nishino & Atkinson, 2015). Nishino and Atkinson (2015) state that language acquisition researchers are yet to take serious examinations of learning as a socio-cognitive process. Linguistic processes which the study perceives as a vocabulary within the theory is perceived as the co-occurrence of cognitive thought and socially formed linguistic rules (Atkinson, 2010, 2002). While cognitive theory excludes sociocultural theory and vice versa, socio-cognitive theory draws on their synergy effectively involving an ecosocial metaphor (Atkinson, 2019). Within the theory, "language is a tool for social action" (Atkinson, 2011, p. 3), and virtually, "all instances of language use present potential learning opportunities" (Nishino & Atkinson, 2015). Nishino and Atkinson (2015) apply the socio-cognitive framework to language, particularly, the production of language tasks. The provision and use of strategies are conceptualised to improve the acquisition performance of students. Broadly, Atkinson (2002) provides that the theory promotes

more than just language, which is “substantially reduced to grammar” (p. 536), as it involves the tutor and students.

The evaluation of the socio-cultural theory as strongly inclined towards a dialectical approach by Khatib and Shakouri (2013) emphasizes the dynamic and interactive nature of language acquisition. This approach acknowledges that language learning occurs through social interactions and that interlocutors play an essential role in the language development process. Kecskes (2010) provides two key notions of the socio-cultural theory in relation to language acquisition. Firstly, it emphasizes that language is a collaborative process in which interlocutors actively participate and contribute to the construction of meaning. Language acquisition is not a passive reception of linguistic input but a joint effort between individuals engaged in communication. Through this interactive process, learners not only receive vocabulary skills but also actively participate in shaping and constructing their linguistic knowledge.

Secondly, the socio-cultural theory recognizes that communication is dynamic and constantly evolving. The process of communication and the exchange of vocabulary skills between individuals shape and constrain the learners' understanding and use of language. As learners engage in social interactions, they acquire new vocabulary, refine their linguistic abilities, and adapt their language use based on the communicative context. The theory highlights the reciprocal relationship between learners and their linguistic environment, where they are both influenced by and actively contribute to the development of language. In the context of vocabulary acquisition, the socio-cultural theory views vocabulary as an essential tool for expressing meaning and engaging in interpersonal and social interactions. Barrot (2015) emphasizes the role of vocabulary in communication, highlighting how words are not only a means of conveying information but also a means of building relationships and achieving social goals. Vocabulary

acquisition is seen as a process of acquiring the linguistic resources necessary for effective communication and meaningful interaction with others.

This perspective underscores the importance of providing learners with opportunities to engage in authentic and meaningful language use. By creating communicative tasks and contexts that require the application of vocabulary in real-life situations, educators can facilitate the integration of vocabulary skills into social interactions. This approach aligns with the socio-cultural theory's emphasis on the social and interactive nature of language acquisition and supports learners in developing their language skills in authentic communicative settings.

Atkinson (2010b) notes three principles of socio-cognitive theory: inseparability principle, adaptive principle, and alignment principle. The inseparability principle looks at the integrative functioning of the mind, body, and eco-social environment to produce social action, including writing (Nishino & Atkinson, 2015). Nishino and Atkinson (2015) provide a deductive pattern to support that adaptive principle. They deduce that “if language is primarily for social action, and social action requires the highly skilled coordination of individuals with each other, then eco-social adaptivity is central to language use” (p. 4). This means that the acquisition of vocabulary is adaptively dependent on factors such as topic or subject area (Hyland, 2010), socio-cultural background (Hu & Ren, 2012; Hu, 2005), academic setting and linguistic competence of the learners. For action, which is conceived in this research as L3 vocabulary acquisition, to be efficient and adaptive, it must be closely tuned to the environment of language learning. Adaptive social action is the emergent outcome of a dynamic process of moment-by-moment interaction (Atkinson, 2011).

The alignment principle looks at the procedural approach to producing and conducting ecosocial elements (Nishino & Atkinson, 2015). Atkinson, Churchill,

Nishino and Okada (2007) define alignment as “how human actors flexibly depend on, integrate with, and construct the ever-changing mind-body-world environments posited by socio-cognitive theory” (p. 171). The researcher explains that to synchronize the vocabulary behaviour of L3 learners, then, the individuals must share understandings and expectations about what they are doing. Thus, Atkinson et al. (2007) found ample evidence of socio-cognitive alignment across tutor, tutee, and environmental affordances in a language acquisition environment. This makes the alignment principle a necessary condition in language acquisition. Figure 2.6.3.2 is a summary of the principles and how they are applied in this research.

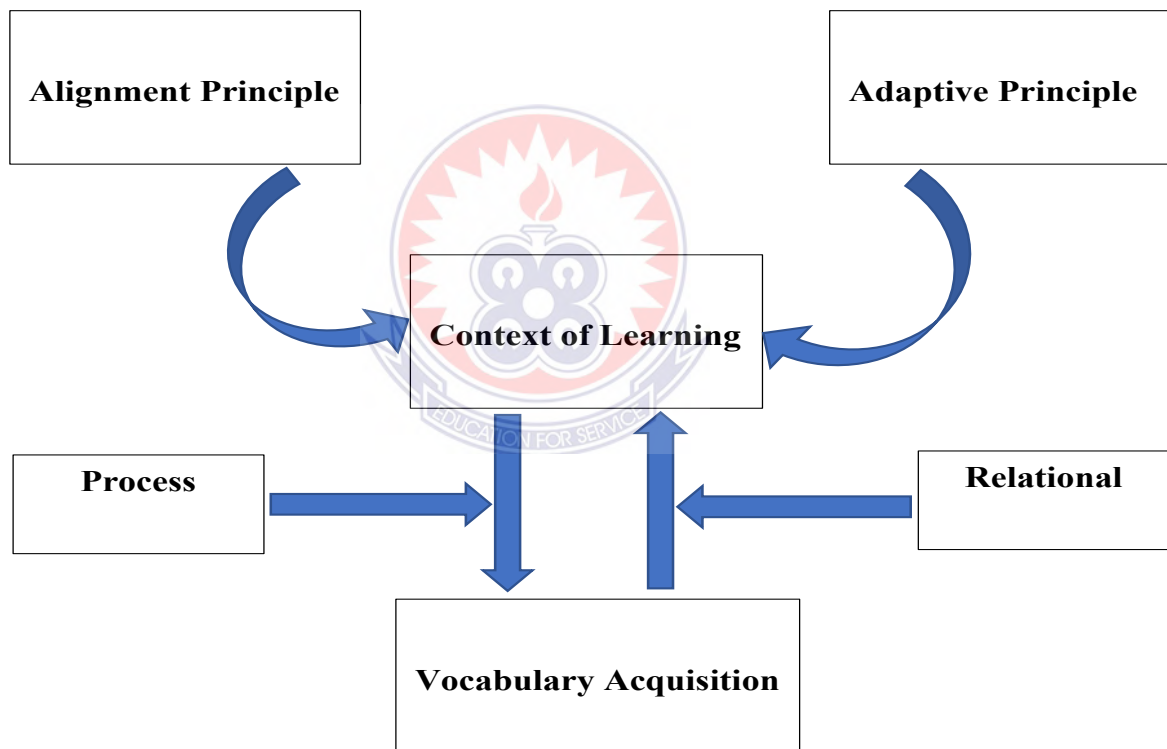


Figure 2.6.3.2. Socio-cognitive theory of language acquisition (Atkinson, 2011)

Deducing from the principles of the theory, the researcher does not wholly apply the framework to analysing the L3 learners’ acquisition of vocabulary through the influence of L1 but adapts alignment and adaptive principles for the conduct of the research. These principles are adopted because they relate to the purpose of the research and help the researcher to achieve the objectives of the study. Additionally, the researcher

excluded the inseparability principle because, while it looks at the integrative functioning of the mind, body and context of learning, the researcher argues that the L1 of the foreign language learners have been decontextualised in a multilingual context (i.e., Ghana) hence cannot serve the basis for learning a third language. Further, the second language becomes the bedrock for the adaptive and alignment principle.

Socio-cognitive approaches to learning, building on the foundation of cognitive theories, place cognition at the core of the learning process but also recognize its inseparable connection with the socio-cultural world. These approaches, influenced by the works of Atkinson (2011, 2002) and Chandrasekaran (2013), propose that learning is a dynamic process of adapting and aligning with the environment. From this perspective, vocabulary acquisition is not seen as an abstract and isolated task for L3 (third language) learners but rather as a contextual and situated process. The assumption is that learners need to connect new vocabulary to meaningful contexts and align their understanding with the socio-cultural environment in which the language is used. This has several implications for vocabulary learning. Firstly, it highlights the importance of providing learners with authentic and meaningful language experiences. Instead of focusing solely on isolated word lists or decontextualized exercises, educators should create learning environments that mirror real-world language use. This can include engaging learners in communicative activities, authentic texts, and cultural contexts that allow them to encounter and use vocabulary in context.

Secondly, this perspective emphasizes the significance of context and situational factors in vocabulary acquisition. Learners need to understand how vocabulary is used in different contexts, such as formal or informal settings, and adapt their usage accordingly. By exposing learners to a variety of authentic contexts and providing guidance on contextual appropriateness, educators can support learners in developing not

only their vocabulary knowledge but also their pragmatic competence. Furthermore, Chandrasekaran (2013) emphasized that socio-cognitive approaches recognize the importance of social interaction in vocabulary acquisition. Language learning is seen as a social process, and learners benefit from opportunities to engage in meaningful interactions with others. Collaborative activities, discussions, and language exchanges can provide learners with the chance to practice using vocabulary in authentic communicative situations, receive feedback, and negotiate meaning, thereby enhancing their vocabulary acquisition (Chandrasekaran, 2013).

Thirdly, building on the idea that cognition extends into the world, the learning process itself should also transcend mere academic exercise and be connected to broader contexts of social action. In the case of L3 learning, it is essential to understand that learners have diverse motivations and goals. Some may be learning the language for further education, seeking employment opportunities, or engaging in multifaceted activities that require proficiency in the L3. From this perspective, the teaching and learning of vocabulary in an L3 should not be treated as an isolated endeavour or limited to the classroom setting alone. Instead, it should be adapted and extended to real-life contexts where learners can apply and practice their language skills in meaningful ways. One way to make vocabulary acquisition practical within the context of learning is by incorporating authentic tasks and projects that reflect real-world situations. For example, learners can engage in role-plays, simulations, or project-based activities that require them to use the acquired vocabulary in realistic contexts. This approach enables learners to see the direct relevance and applicability of their vocabulary knowledge in everyday life, enhancing their motivation and engagement in the learning process.

While I have provided justifications for the application of the theoretical principles, there are methodological principles on which socio-cognitive theory is

hinged. These principles deepen the essence of adapting the theory for the study. Firstly, the methodological principle emphasizes particularity. The argument is that, in second language acquisition, research has made generalizations more than providing particulars (Hyland & Hyland, 2019). In this regard, as the researcher focuses on the third language, the methodological principle of particularity is applied to examine individual learners' experiences in the process of learning. This falls well with convergent parallel design which is deductible from the topic. Secondly, there is the principle of process in the methodology of socio-cognitive theory. Most first and second language studies have studied language acquisition as a product by measuring tests and scales based on learners' knowledge of linguistic resources (Doughty, 2003). However, in this study, the researcher conceptualizes L3 as a process from the socio-cognitive perspective. From practical experience, the researcher argues that L3 acquisition is a continuous, complex and non-linear process which is best facilitated through interactions, including educational institutions. In this regard, vocabulary acquisition becomes relational. Finally, the theory plays dwells on variation, concrete experience, and performance.

Individuals bring unique worldly experiences and backgrounds to the process of learning, and acknowledging and studying these experiences can provide a deeper understanding of learners as human beings. Socio-cognitive approaches to language learning emphasize the notion of *learning to do by doing*, as proposed by Atkinson (2011b). This perspective suggests that learners acquire language skills by actively engaging in real-world goals and social actions. In the context of vocabulary acquisition, socio-cognitive methodologies emphasize the importance of studying and analyzing the real-world use of the L3. Instead of viewing vocabulary learning as a mechanical and isolated process, these approaches recognize the significance of authentic and meaningful language use in diverse social contexts. By examining how learners apply

their acquired vocabulary in real-life situations, researchers can gain insights into the dynamic nature of language acquisition and the ways in which learners actively engage with the L3 in their daily lives. Studying real-world L3 use through socio-cognitive methodologies provides a more holistic and comprehensive understanding of vocabulary acquisition. It moves beyond rote memorization and drills and instead focuses on the practical application of vocabulary in meaningful interactions. By observing and analyzing how learners employ their vocabulary in various social and communicative contexts, researchers can uncover the nuanced processes and strategies employed by learners to comprehend, produce, and negotiate meaning in the L3.

In all, the framework places a strong emphasis on social interaction and its role in shaping learners' thinking processes, particularly in the context of L3 acquisition and vocabulary learning. By considering the social dimension of language acquisition, this theory provides valuable insights into how students' interactions with tutors, peers, and the learning environment influence their cognitive processes and ultimately impact their vocabulary acquisition. The socio-cognitive theory is particularly relevant in grounding the study on vocabulary acquisition, as it addresses the identified problem of limited research in this area. By adopting this theoretical framework, the study acknowledges the importance of understanding the social and cognitive aspects of vocabulary acquisition, and how they interact and shape each other. Furthermore, the study recognizes the dearth of implementation of the socio-cognitive theory in language learning contexts, as highlighted by Larsen-Freeman (2018). This lack of implementation may have contributed to the limited research supporting the impact of the theory on vocabulary acquisition, as mentioned by Cheung, Chu, and Jang (2021). By addressing this gap in the literature and exploring the potential of the socio-cognitive theory in vocabulary acquisition, the study contributes to the existing body of knowledge and deepens our

understanding of effective language learning strategies. The adoption of the socio-cognitive theory as a theoretical framework in the study enables researchers to delve into the interactive nature of language learning and the role of social interaction in vocabulary acquisition.

Much is known about the impact of vocabulary instruction on reading skills, word knowledge, and reading comprehension (Ganske, 2018; Moody et al., 2018). However, knowledge of the underlying theories that guide vocabulary instruction and L1 influence on students' achievement has not been investigated. Finally, Atkinson (2011) admonishes that given that the theory is relatively new, it is open to a wide range of possibilities in language acquisition research, hence its adoption for the study.

2.6.4 Summary

In summary, this section has discussed key foundations and research related to first, second, and foreign language acquisition, highlighting the integral role of vocabulary and socio-cognitive factors. It establishes the theoretical framework for the study. Vocabulary acquisition is essential for language mastery. It requires repeated exposure, active engagement, and use of words in meaningful contexts. A lack of vocabulary hinders communication. Theoretical frameworks reviewed include socio-cultural theory (emphasizes social interaction), cognitive theory (focuses on mental processes), and socio-cognitive theory (integrates social and cognitive factors). The socio-cognitive theory is adopted as it provides a comprehensive lens incorporating social, cognitive, and contextual factors influential in vocabulary acquisition. Its principles are applied to explore L3 vocabulary learning.

2.7 Challenges EFL learners encounter in acquiring vocabulary skills

The process of acquiring a new language is a multifaceted and complex journey, particularly when it comes to learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Among

the essential components of language acquisition, vocabulary plays a pivotal role in facilitating effective communication, comprehension, and expression. However, the acquisition of a rich and diverse lexicon in a foreign language is not without its hurdles and challenges. These factors may include the influence of the learners' first language, cognitive processes involved in vocabulary retention, the impact of exposure and immersion, the role of context in word learning, and the effectiveness of different teaching methodologies and techniques.

2.7.1 Limited exposure and practice

A major challenge for EFL learners is their limited exposure to authentic language use and opportunities to practice vocabulary skills (Vaezi & Noora, 2021). Especially in foreign language contexts, learners may only encounter English during classroom lessons. This provides insufficient exposure compared to immersion settings (Webb & Chang, 2012). Without repeated encounters of words in context, it is difficult for learners to grasp and retain new vocabulary (Rott, 1999). The lack of practice applying vocabulary also hinders proficiency (Schmitt, 2008). As Rott (1999) found, "incidental acquisition of vocabulary is highly constrained in foreign language settings" (p. 226).

Teachers should maximize authentic materials and communicative activities in class to compensate for the lack of English exposure outside school (Gilmore, 2007). Authentic texts can provide meaningful encounters with vocabulary in context (Shrestha, 2020). And productive tasks like discussions and role-plays create opportunities to practice using new words (Schmitt, 2008). As Webb and Chang (2012) recommend, "in the absence of sufficient L2 exposure outside the classroom, teachers need to take advantage of classroom time by providing EFL learners with plentiful opportunities for

L2 input and vocabulary practice" (p. 105). This can help mitigate the vocabulary acquisition challenges stemming from limited immersion in the target language.

2.7.2 Isolated vs. contextualized learning

Traditional vocabulary instruction often relies on bilingual word lists, flashcards, and memorization. However, research shows vocabulary is best acquired by encountering words in meaningful contexts (Brown et al., 2008; Webb, 2007). Isolated vocabulary learning lacks connections to real-world usage (Stahl & Fairbanks, 1986). As Webb (2007) explains, "vocabulary taught in semantic clusters or through rich instruction is learned better than vocabulary taught in isolated word lists" (p. 81). EFL teachers should embed vocabulary in authentic texts, conversations, and activities providing contextual cues (Baicheng, 2009; Crossley et al., 2009). Technology can also expose learners to context-rich vocabulary via digital materials (Chang & Huang, 2015). Decontextualized learning hinders retention and appropriate usage of words (Steinel et al., 2007).

2.7.3 Lack of engagement

Another consistent challenge is learners' lack of engagement and motivation to master vocabulary (Song et al., 2023). Unlike grammar patterns, vocabulary acquisition is an open-ended process without fixed endpoints. This can discourage learners who feel overwhelmed by the vastness of English vocabulary. Building self-efficacy and fostering enjoyment in word learning are crucial to keeping learners motivated over the long term (Svalberg, 2009). Gamification, personalized goal-setting, and progress tracking are some techniques to engage learners.

2.7.4 Inadequate learning strategies

Many EFL learners rely solely on rote memorization to learn vocabulary which yields poor outcomes (Goundar, 2015). They lack awareness and skills in applying

strategies like spaced repetition, mnemonics, semantic mapping and contextual guessing that make learning efficient (Gu & Johnson, 1996). Explicit teaching of evidence-based vocabulary learning strategies empowers learners and accelerates acquisition. Learners should have a personalized toolkit of strategies to employ.

2.7.5 Interference from mother tongue

EFL learners often encounter challenges due to the differences between their native language and English, particularly in terms of vocabulary and sentence structures. These disparities can result in errors that affect their ability to communicate effectively in English. Such errors can be attributed to language transfer, where learners inadvertently apply linguistic rules or word choices from their first language to English. To mitigate these issues, it is crucial for teachers to actively encourage the analysis of both the distinctions and parallels between the learner's native language and English. This comparative approach serves as a valuable tool for enhancing comprehension and reducing errors in the process of acquiring English as a second language (Ringbom, 1987).

Language transfer, or cross-linguistic influence, operates in two directions, affecting both the learner's production of their first language and their acquisition of a new language (Jarvis & Pavlenko, 2008). While learners may unintentionally transfer elements from their first language into their English usage, they can also use their knowledge of their native language to facilitate the learning process by recognizing similarities or shared patterns between the languages. On the flip side, learners can also benefit from recognizing similarities between their first language and English. Cognates, or words that share similar forms and meanings in different languages, can be particularly helpful.

2.7.6 Technology integration

Multimedia modes, such as video, audio, and hypertext, have transformed the landscape of language learning by offering immersive and engaging contexts for vocabulary development. These multimedia resources provide learners with authentic and diverse language experiences, enhancing their understanding and retention of new words (Nation, 2003). Nevertheless, while the integration of technology in language education has garnered much enthusiasm, it is crucial to assess whether the actual vocabulary gains match the initial excitement (Nation, 2011). Furthermore, it is essential to consider how technology aligns with pedagogical objectives to maximize its potential benefits in language learning.

Incorporating multimedia into language instruction can indeed be a double-edged sword. On one hand, multimedia resources can captivate learners' attention and interest, making the learning process more enjoyable and effective (Levy & Kennedy, 2005). They can provide real-world examples of language usage, expose learners to different accents and contexts, and reinforce vocabulary through repeated exposure in various forms. As Salaberry (2001) recommends, "the instructional benefits of a particular technology need to be demonstrated rather than assumed" (p. 41). For instance, watching a documentary or listening to a podcast in the target language can expose learners to authentic vocabulary in a meaningful context. Multimedia can provide scaffolding but may not automatically improve acquisition over traditional methods (Soleimani & Mahdavi-pour, 2012).

2.7.7 Summary

In summary, EFL learners contend with insufficient language exposure, decontextualized learning, lack of motivation, ineffective strategies and mother tongue interference. A multifaceted pedagogical response addressing these challenges is needed

to strengthen EFL vocabulary acquisition. How teachers leverage learners' first language also impacts the process, requiring careful consideration. Ultimately learners need a balanced diet of contextual inference, direct instruction, spaced repetition and multidimensional engagement to enrich and consolidate lexical growth. Effective vocabulary teaching requires thoughtfully synergizing methodology, materials and activities.

2.8 Factors that account for the challenges EFL learners encounter in acquiring vocabulary skills

Vocabulary proficiency underpins effective communication, comprehension, and expression, empowering learners to navigate the complexities of the language with confidence and precision. However, the journey towards achieving a robust lexicon in a foreign language is riddled with challenges that often impede learners' progress. Some of the challenges accounting for the challenges are discussed in the ensuing subsections.

2.8.1 Limited L2 exposure

Limited exposure to the target language, particularly in authentic contexts, poses a significant challenge for learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The importance of authentic language exposure in the process of language acquisition cannot be overstated. This challenge primarily stems from the fact that many EFL learners do not have sufficient opportunities to interact with native speakers, engage in real-life conversations, or access authentic materials in the target language. This limitation has profound implications for vocabulary acquisition and overall language proficiency (Krashen, 1989).

Vocabulary acquisition is not merely about memorizing words and their meanings; it also involves understanding how words are used in real-life conversations and contexts. Authentic conversations provide learners with exposure to idiomatic

expressions, colloquialisms, and the nuanced meanings of words (Schmitt, 2000). EFL learners who lack opportunities for meaningful conversations may struggle to grasp the subtleties of vocabulary use. Authentic materials, such as newspapers, books, films, and online content, offer a diverse range of language use. Learners can encounter vocabulary in various registers, from formal to informal, and in different contexts (Day & Bamford, 1998). The consequences of limited exposure to authentic language contexts are significant. Without the chance to witness how words are naturally employed in speech and writing, learners may rely on rote memorization or struggle to use vocabulary effectively in real-world situations (Nation, 2001).

2.8.2 Ineffective teaching methods

Traditional pedagogical approaches that heavily emphasize rote memorization and isolated word lists have been found to be less effective in fostering long-term vocabulary retention and application (Hulstijn, 2001). These methods often lack meaningful context and fail to engage learners in a way that promotes deep understanding and practical usage of the acquired vocabulary. An alternative and more successful approach to vocabulary instruction involves the integration of new words into authentic language tasks and communicative activities (Nation, 2001). This method not only provides learners with opportunities to encounter words in context but also encourages active engagement and application of their newly acquired knowledge. Instead of passively memorizing word lists, learners actively engage with the language through meaningful tasks. This could involve discussing a topic, writing a short passage, or participating in a group activity centered around specific vocabulary (Hatch & Brown, 1995). Repetition, when embedded in context-rich exercises, reinforces memory and aids in the internalization of new words. In this regard, learners are more likely to retain and readily recall the words in future language encounters (Webb, 2007).

2.8.3 Cross-linguistic influence

Cross-linguistic influence from learners' first language (L1) often impacts their understanding and use of vocabulary in the target language (Llach, 2011). Both similarities and differences between L1 words and English lexical items can create facilitative or interfering effects during acquisition. For example, cognates that share form and meaning can positively transfer and accelerate learning of the related vocabulary in English (Lotto & de Groot, 1998). However, false cognates with overlapping form but different meanings may mislead learners and require explicit clarification to avoid confusion (Llach, 2011).

Likewise, misleading partial cognates that overlap in form but differ in part of speech or morphological behavior can disrupt vocabulary uptake (Holmes & Guerra Ramos, 1993). Teachers should identify potential false or partial cognates that could impede acquisition. Providing the L1 translation and examples of usage can illuminate the distinctions. Furthermore, errors may arise from differences in collocational patterning across languages (Nesselhauf, 2003). Learners tend to rely on L1 collocations, which do not always align with conventional English word partnerships. Raising awareness and modeling target collocations can mitigate negative transfer.

2.8.4 Resource constraints

In some EFL settings, limited access to suitable learning resources, such as textbooks, digital materials, or language-learning tools, can hinder vocabulary acquisition. Inadequate learning resources often mean that learners have limited exposure to a diverse range of words. This limitation can impede their ability to encounter new vocabulary and expand their word knowledge. Insufficient resources may result in a narrow and restricted vocabulary repertoire (Hatch & Brown, 1995). Learning resources, such as textbooks or digital materials, provide valuable context for vocabulary

acquisition. They present words in sentences and passages, demonstrating how they are used in real-world situations. In the absence of suitable resources, learners may struggle to grasp the contextual nuances of words, hindering their ability to use them effectively (Nation, 2001).

Inaccessible or unavailable resources can restrict learners' opportunities for independent study and self-directed learning. Learners who do not have access to adequate resources may find it challenging to reinforce and expand their vocabulary outside the classroom (Schwartz & Moinester, 2018). In some cases, available resources may not align with learners' proficiency levels. For instance, resources designed for advanced learners can overwhelm beginners, while materials for beginners may bore more advanced students. This mismatch can hinder effective vocabulary learning and frustrate learners (Nation, 2001).

2.8.5 Summary

In effect, EFL learners encounter various challenges in acquiring vocabulary skills, including limited exposure to the target language, ineffective teaching methods, learner attitudes, cross-linguistic influence, and resource constraints. A holistic and multifaceted approach that emphasizes meaningful context, engagement, positive attitudes, cross-linguistic awareness, and resource allocation is essential to overcome these hurdles and foster successful EFL vocabulary acquisition. Educators and policymakers must collaborate to implement evidence-based strategies that support learners on their language learning journey.

2.9 Related studies

The researcher conducts a review of previous empirical research related to the present study in this portion. The researcher considers studies in second and foreign language acquisition as well as vocabulary acquisition. The review is presented from a

global perspective and specified in Ghana. Several studies have been conducted from the EFL contexts. These have been from several perspectives. For instance, Similarly, the study conducted by Tassana-ngam (2005) highlights the effectiveness of specific vocabulary learning strategies in enhancing the knowledge and acquisition of vocabulary among Thai EFL undergraduate learners. By focusing on strategies such as semantic context, keyword method, dictionary work, grouping, and semantic mapping, the researcher aimed to provide learners with practical tools to improve their vocabulary learning process. The keyword method is a valuable strategy that can aid vocabulary learning. This technique involves associating a new word with a familiar word or image that sounds or looks similar, helping learners remember the meaning of the target word. Dictionary work involves teaching learners how to effectively use dictionaries to expand their vocabulary. This includes guiding them on how to identify relevant information such as word definitions, examples, and synonyms, as well as encouraging them to engage in active dictionary usage during their language learning process. Also, grouping and semantic mapping strategies focus on organizing vocabulary items into meaningful categories or visual representations. Grouping involves categorizing words based on shared characteristics or themes, while semantic mapping visually illustrates the relationships between words, helping learners grasp connections and associations between vocabulary items.

Min (2008) compared the effectiveness of reading plus vocabulary-enhancement activities (RV) and narrow reading (NR) - repeated reading of thematically related articles - on vocabulary acquisition and retention among English as a foreign language (EFL). Twenty-five third-year male students with intermediate English proficiency participated in each instructional treatment for 2 hours per week over five weeks. The RV group read selected texts and practiced various vocabulary exercises. The NR group

read supplemental materials related to the themes of the selected texts. A Chinese adaptation of the Vocabulary Knowledge Scale assessed students' knowledge of 50 vocabulary items. The RV group demonstrated significantly more knowledge of the target vocabulary than the NR group on acquisition and retention tests. The researcher concluded reading plus focused vocabulary exercises are more effective and efficient than narrow reading for enhancing target vocabulary acquisition and retention among EFL students.

Sutrisna (2021) argued it is important for language teachers to carefully consider vocabulary teaching strategies that provide meaningful benefits for acquisition. Strategies should facilitate learning objectives while providing enjoyable, meaningful activities that actively and creatively engage students during vocabulary instruction. Student involvement promotes comprehension and vocabulary development. The paper explored three innovative strategies: Flip-a-Chip, Word Ladders, and The Ripple Effect.

Bin-Hady (2021) examined the advantages of (digital) games for developing EFL students' vocabulary acquisition. The review discussed widely used games for enhancing acquisition and introduced them to instructors for classroom use. It also explored essential procedures for incorporating games. Games make lessons enjoyable, minimize anxiety, aid recall, and provide context. Games like The Sims and Semantic Boggle are among the most widely used for retention. Teachers are advised to use suitable vocabulary games linked to course content. The review recommended including games in English curricula and teaching.

Likewise, Hassan Taj et al. (2017) investigated a computer/mobile phone model's impact on EFL vocabulary learning among first-year preparatory students at a public university. The quasi-experimental pretest/posttest control group study involved 122 students. Six weeks of vocabulary activities were presented via PCs and multi-glossed

vocabulary cards sent to phones via WhatsApp. The treatment group significantly outperformed the control group on the posttest. The impact was gender-neutral as both males and females benefitted.

Bao (2019) compared the effects of input and output tasks on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners' acquisition of vocabulary knowledge. Four intact EFL classes were randomly assigned one of four tasks to learn 18 target words through sentence reading exercises: matching, definition, choice, and combining. The definition task was more effective for EFL vocabulary knowledge than the other tasks, regardless of proficiency. At each proficiency level, the matching and combining tasks performed equally well. The choice task had a small advantage over matching and combining for low proficiency learners, but not intermediate or high proficiency. Differential processing and divided attention may affect task effectiveness.

Odinokaya et al. (2021) investigated the Discord application's role in teaching and learning EFL vocabulary. A pre-test/post-test design collected data from one experimental and one control group of 80 university students total. Pre-test results showed no significant group differences. The experimental group used Discord for instruction while the control group received traditional classroom instruction with a textbook but no electronic resources, 180 minutes weekly. T-test results indicated the experimental group significantly outperformed the control group on a researcher-made vocabulary post-test. Experimental students used more vocabulary items correctly per person (pronunciation, combinability). Findings revealed Discord may positively influence EFL vocabulary acquisition and speaking application. The study recommends using Discord to reinforce in-class tasks and activities for teaching and learning EFL vocabulary.

In recent years, there has been increasing interest in L3 acquisition (L3A) in formal approaches to language, with numerous studies investigating a variety of language combinations (e.g., Bardel & Falk, 2012; Hermas, 2015; Jin, 2009; Rothman, 2015; Westergaard et al., 2017). For instance, Bardel and Falk (2012) examined the vocabulary acquisition of foreign language learners using English as the target language. From their analysis, although their findings contradicted several studies, they report the need for tutors to focus on individual students given their diverse backgrounds. Their recommendation for several studies in the area was also considered in the conduct of this research.

Westergaard et al.'s (2017) study explored cross-linguistic influence in the acquisition of a third language. Guided by three research questions, and an experimental method using 99 participants, the researchers present insightful findings from the analysis. The analysis reveals that while L1 Norwegian children over-accept ungrammatical sentences in English with a word order that reflects verb movement (V2), bilingual Norwegian-Russian children notice these errors significantly more often, just like L1 Russians. At the same time, the bilinguals score lower than L1 Russian children on grammatical trials, suggesting the presence of non-facilitative influence from Norwegian.

Other studies have also reported L1 influence in L3 acquisition. No model of absolute L1 transfer in L3 acquisition has been proposed, yet several studies have found evidence of L1 influence (Herms, 2014; Jin, 2009; Na Ranong & Leung, 2009). For example, Herms (2014) finds that L1 Arabic is the source of both facilitative and non-facilitative transfer for advanced L2 French adults in the initial stages of L3 English (in two different constructions). Furthermore, Jin (2009) observes a non-facilitative effect

of L1 Chinese on L3 Norwegian, despite the presence of an advanced L2 English grammar which instantiates the target feature.

Other studies find influence from the L2, which has led to the L2 Status Factor model, according to which the L2 is a privileged source of transfer, especially at early stages (Bardel & Falk, 2012). This model is supported by experimental evidence suggesting that implicit linguistic competence and explicit metalinguistic knowledge are neuro-linguistically distinct and have different memory sources (Paradis, 2009), the former being sustained by procedural memory and the latter by declarative memory (Ullmann, 2001). Thus, while L1 grammar is implicitly acquired and sustained by procedural memory, L2 grammar is typically based on explicit knowledge and sustained by declarative memory. And since L3 grammar is learned in the same way as L2 grammar, the transfer will occur between the two languages that are both stored in declarative memory. In vocabulary studies, Naeimi and Foo (2015) investigated the effectiveness of implementing direct and indirect vocabulary learning strategies on vocabulary acquisition of pre-intermediate language learners. The researchers used sixty (60) participants in experimental research of pre- and post-tests. The results indicated that the direct group (A) outperformed the indirect group (B). The results showed that direct strategies at the pre-intermediate level can lead to the higher achievement of vocabulary storage in reading comprehension.

Bartolotti and Marian (2017) explored vocabulary learning in a third language. Their study hinged on the notion that for bilingual third-language learners, it is necessary to determine how their two existing languages interact during novel language learning. They used 20 English-German bilingual adults who were taught an artificial language containing 48 novel written words that varied orthogonally in English and German word similarity (neighbourhood size and orthostatic probability). Word similarity in each

language improved word production accuracy, and similarity to one language provided the same benefit as dual-language overlap. In addition, bilinguals' memory of novel words was affected by the statistical distributions of letters in the novel language. Results indicate that bilinguals utilize both languages during third language acquisition, supporting a scaffolding learning model.

The longitudinal study conducted by Sparks and Deacon (2012) aimed to investigate the relationship between morphological awareness and vocabulary acquisition in children. The researchers focused on 100 participants in Grades 2 and 3 and employed cross-lagged regression analyses with autoregressive controls to examine the temporal relationship between these two constructs. Morphological awareness refers to the ability to recognize and manipulate the meaningful parts of words, such as prefixes, suffixes, and root words. It plays a crucial role in vocabulary development as it allows learners to make connections between words, understand word meanings, and infer the meanings of unfamiliar words based on their morphological structure. The researchers found that morphological awareness in Grade 2 predicted changes in vocabulary between Grades 2 and 3. This suggests that children with higher levels of morphological awareness in Grade 2 showed greater growth in vocabulary knowledge over time. This finding supports the idea that morphological awareness contributes to vocabulary acquisition and underscores the importance of explicitly teaching morphological knowledge to enhance vocabulary development. Interestingly, the study did not find evidence of a reverse relationship, indicating that vocabulary knowledge in Grade 2 did not predict changes in morphological awareness between Grades 2 and 3. This suggests that while vocabulary plays a crucial role in language learning, it may not have a direct impact on the development of morphological awareness in the context of this study.

The study conducted by Tufekci and Sapar (2011) focused on the effectiveness of a constructive method in vocabulary acquisition and its impact on various language skills. The researchers observed that this approach not only enhances students' ability to produce words but also improves their communication skills, grammar knowledge, reading abilities, and cultural understanding. It fosters motivation, encourages active engagement, and cultivates cognitive and metacognitive strategies that support students' language learning and development. The constructive method emphasizes the active engagement and participation of students in the learning process. It encourages learners to construct meaning and make connections between new vocabulary and their existing knowledge. This approach incorporates cognitive and metacognitive strategies, which involve using various mental processes to enhance learning, such as organizing information, making associations, and monitoring one's own learning. One significant outcome of implementing the constructive method is the enhancement of students' motivation to learn a foreign language. This increased motivation can have a positive impact on their overall language proficiency and their willingness to continue learning and improving.

The subsequent paragraphs present some studies in Ghana. For instance, Alaza (2019) explored how to use extensive reading to enhance the vocabulary acquisition of students in senior high schools. The researcher used oral interviews, pre-test, post-test, questionnaires and other interventional activities to collect data on the study. The findings established that some of the causes of students' vocabulary problems were interlingual and intralingual interference. It was also realized that students were not interested in reading, particularly, extensive reading. Most importantly poor teaching style of teachers was another cause.

Orevaoghene (2020) investigated the strategies used in teaching geometry in primary six as well as the perception of teachers on geometry vocabulary teaching, how geometry vocabularies were taught and, lastly, how the teaching of geometry vocabulary influenced primary six learners' performance in geometry. Adopting a mixed-method with a total population of 250 primary learners, his analysis revealed some findings similar to what has been reported in the literature. The study found that geometry vocabularies were not taught and that the most commonly used strategy for teaching geometry was the drawing of 2-D shapes and models of 3-D objects on the board. The pre-test and post-test scores were analysed using a paired t-test and the results indicated that the intervention had a positive effect. The qualitative and quantitative results confirmed that the teaching of geometry vocabulary improved learners' performance in geometry. In this regard, I propose that the vocabulary acquisition of the L3 learners can quicken their general language acquisition.

Nyaradzo and Thiel-Burgess (2012) indicated that a classroom with different learning needs and diverse language backgrounds poses a great challenge to the class teacher. In such classrooms, students often exhibit a wide range of academic abilities and English language proficiency levels, which can pose considerable difficulties for teachers in effectively addressing their individual learning needs. Students learning the English language in schools present a specific challenge to teachers as they represent such a varied range of academic ability and English language abilities. One of the main challenges faced by teachers in this context is creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment that caters to the diverse needs of students. As students come from different language backgrounds, they bring with them varying levels of English language proficiency, which can significantly impact their ability to understand and engage with the curriculum. Teachers must therefore be adept at designing instruction that is

accessible and meaningful to students with different language abilities, ensuring that no student is left behind. In conclusion, the study by Nyaradzo and Thiel-Burgess (2012) sheds light on the challenges faced by teachers in classrooms with diverse learning needs and varied language backgrounds.

Kwarteng (2023) conducted a study to determine the level of vocabulary acquisition by second language (L2) Swahili learners after viewing a Swahili movie with either Swahili or English subtitles. Thirty L2 Swahili students from the University of Ghana, aged 18-30, were divided into two groups. English is the medium of instruction and official language in Ghana. Participants took vocabulary tests before and after watching the movie. Pre-tests were administered before the movie and post-tests immediately after. Data were analyzed in Excel. Post-test results showed vocabulary gains for all participants after viewing the movie, with the standard group showing statistically significant increases. Kwarteng's (2023) study suggests viewing a movie in L2 with first language (L1) subtitles has a greater effect on vocabulary acquisition than L2 subtitles.

Additionally, Stoffelsma et al. (2020) provided empirical evidence for a serial multiple mediator model supporting the relationship between morphological awareness, vocabulary knowledge, reading proficiency, and academic achievement in English students. Comparisons were made at general and academic English levels. Data were collected from 454 second- and third-year English university students in Ghana, West Africa. Using two mediation analyses, the study found significant evidence for a two-mediator model at both levels. Morphological awareness was modeled as affecting academic achievement through four pathways: indirectly through vocabulary, indirectly through reading comprehension, indirectly through vocabulary and reading

comprehension sequentially, and directly. This demonstrates morphology's direct and indirect influence on academic achievement in tertiary English contexts.

Furthermore, Nti (2019) aimed to increase the vocabulary knowledge of students, emphasizing the importance of vocabulary in learning and reading comprehension. The researcher received responses from students indicating that understanding vocabulary made reading enjoyable and interesting. Furthermore, the research cited Mckeown and Nagy to emphasize the close relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension. It was highlighted that students with larger vocabularies are more capable readers and have a wider repertoire of strategies for figuring out the meaning of unfamiliar words.

Quite differently from the reviewed studies which looked at grammar, syntax and semantics, the researcher situates her work in vocabulary research which has received little attention in language acquisition studies. Additionally, the empirical review presents the dominance of experimental and quantitative studies in L3 acquisition literature which also highlights a dearth of studies in qualitative research. In this regard, the researcher adopts the qualitative research design, specifically a convergent parallel design to explore the L3 acquisition which makes the research novel. To address this gap, the next chapter of the research discusses in detail the research design. Furthermore, while the plethora of studies used larger participants, the researcher assumes that the findings are generalized rather than particularized as the socio-cognitive theory espouses. As such the researcher adopts a relatively smaller number of participants to provide a comprehensive overview of the situation by focusing on the individual L3 learners.

2.10 Conclusion

In conclusion, this literature review has provided an overview of key research and theories related to vocabulary acquisition among EFL learners, particularly those learning English as a third language (L3). Several salient points emerge from the review. Firstly, vocabulary learning is essential for developing language proficiency and effective communication, underscoring its importance in L2 and L3 education. However, EFL learners face multifaceted challenges in acquiring vocabulary skills, including limited exposure, inadequate teaching methods, cross-linguistic influence and affective factors. These challenges necessitate a thoughtful pedagogical response grounded in research evidence.

Secondly, theories of language acquisition have evolved from early cognitive and socio-cultural approaches to integrated socio-cognitive frameworks that acknowledge social, cognitive and contextual influences on the vocabulary learning process. The socio-cognitive perspective, with its emphasis on adaptation, alignment and authentic learning, provides a robust theoretical lens for exploring L3 vocabulary acquisition. However, limited research exists on implementing this approach in vocabulary instruction. Thirdly, while considerable research has examined L2 vocabulary learning, fewer studies focus specifically on L3 acquisition and the potential transfer effects from learners' L1 and L2 linguistic knowledge. Existing L3 research reveals complex cross-linguistic relationships but further work is needed, especially from diverse educational contexts.

Finally, studies highlight the benefits of direct vocabulary instruction and learning strategies to boost acquisition. But the effectiveness of specific techniques remains debated. More research on implementing evidence-based vocabulary practices in real-world classrooms is warranted. Overall, this review establishes the need for

further investigation into L3 vocabulary learning that considers linguistic, cognitive and pedagogical factors influencing the process. The proposed study will address existing knowledge gaps by qualitatively exploring L3 vocabulary acquisition experiences among Ghanaian high school students through a socio-cognitive lens. The research will provide insights to guide context-appropriate pedagogical responses aimed at enhancing L3 vocabulary competency and learning outcomes.



CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

The initial chapter discussed the theory that underpins this research. Other relevant concepts and empirical evidence were reviewed to put the study in a better perspective. This chapter discusses the research procedures that were adopted for the conduct of the study. In this chapter, the researcher presents the research design, research approach, sample size techniques, data collection and analysis procedures and ethical considerations.

3.1 Research approach

Creswell and Creswell (2017) reveal three primary approaches to research: quantitative; qualitative; and mixed-method. This study utilizes a mixed methods approach to collect and analyse data, and report the results. The quantitative approach affords statistical tools to analyse data (Omair, 2015). It ensures a level of objectivity in the interpretation of results through statistical data. Quantitative researchers “seek explanations and predictions that will generate to other persons and places. The intent is to establish, confirm, or validate relationships and to develop generalizations that contribute to the theory” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001, p. 102). The findings can be predicted and confirmed. The qualitative approach has become an accepted legitimate form of inquiry in the social sciences, and researchers of all methodological persuasions recognize its value in obtaining detailed contextualized information (Creswell et al., 2003). Qualitative research can also be described as an effective model that occurs in a natural setting that enables the researcher to develop a level of detail from being highly involved in the actual experiences (Creswell, 2003). In its application in the present study, the researcher interviews the participants in the selected schools which are their

natural settings. Given that quantitative methods are intended to achieve a breadth of understanding and qualitative aims to achieve a depth of understanding in data (Patton, 2002), adopting the mixed-method approach proves useful to amass the strength of each approach.

According to Creswell (1999), a mixed-methods research approach at its simplest level involves mixing both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis in a single study. The mixed-method approach neutralizes some, if not all, of the limitations associated with quantitative and qualitative data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Greene and Caracelli (1997) observe that there is a wide consensus that using mixed methods can strengthen a study. It interrelates quantitative and qualitative data. The mixed-methods approach is an extension of, not a replacement for, quantitative and qualitative research methods, as the latter two will continue to be useful and important (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

3.2 Research design

The choice, relevance and justification of an appropriate methodology to study a particular problem usually raise a challenge for researchers (Bonsu, 2021). This is because the research design adopted for a study goes a long way to affect the analysis of the data and the conclusions that would be drawn. Research design indicates the plan or the basic structure of a study which relates to the nature of the research questions. To facilitate the findings and generalizability of the results, convergent parallel, within the mixed-method approach (Steckler et al. 1992), was used. Within this model, the study collects both qualitative and quantitative data; however, qualitative data is used to explain the quantitative data for a complete understanding of the findings. This design aims to provide a more holistic and complete understanding of the research topic by

combining the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative methods. This is represented in Figure 3.2 as follows:

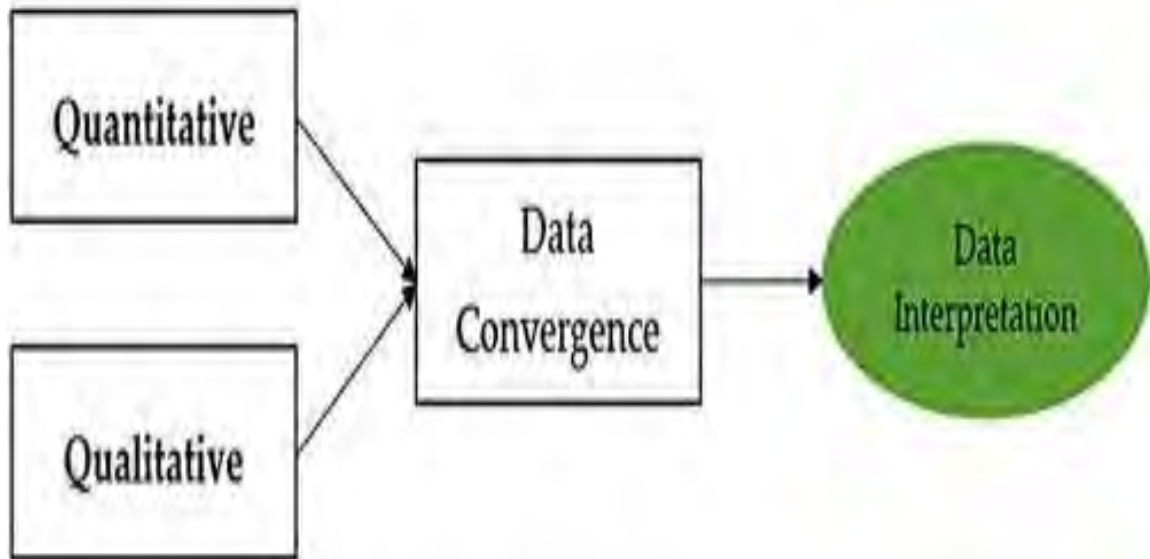


Figure 3.2. Model of using mixed-method approach

(Adapted from Steckler et al., 1992)

In Figure 3.2, priority was given to both quantitative and qualitative data, but the quantitative data was emphasized while using the quantitative data in explanatory procedures. The convergent parallel design was particularly useful when the research question cannot be fully addressed by either quantitative or qualitative methods alone, or when the researcher wants to validate or triangulate findings from one method with the other (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The convergent parallel design offered the researcher the opportunity to design a single study that answers questions about the complex nature of phenomena and the relationship between measurable variables from the participants' perspective.

This design is highly beneficial for gaining a deep and holistic understanding of the factors affecting the vocabulary acquisition process of students of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Ghana. The convergent parallel design is a valuable approach in research that allows for a more comprehensive understanding of complex research

questions by integrating both quantitative and qualitative data (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). This design also allows researchers to capitalize on the strengths of each method and provide a more comprehensive understanding of a research problem (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

In a convergent parallel research design, the qualitative and quantitative data are collected and analyzed independently, but simultaneously, during the same study period (Creswell, 2014). After the separate data analyses, findings from both components are compared and integrated, allowing researchers to draw conclusions based on the complementary evidence provided by each method (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). The rationale behind using the convergent parallel design is to gain a deeper understanding of the research problem by combining the numerical insights of quantitative research with the detailed context provided by qualitative research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). This approach helps researchers identify areas of agreement and disagreement between the two sets of findings, ultimately offering a richer and more nuanced understanding of the research question (Creswell, 2014).

3.3 Population

The population of a study encompasses the target individuals who are involved in the study to whom the findings of the study are generalized (Bonsu, 2021). I define the population in this study as the entire accumulation of cases that meet a planned set of criteria. The definition aligns with the research approach adopted. In that case, Duff (2014) argues that the population or participants should be clearly defined and delimited to put the exploration in a better scope. Generally, the population for this study is worth investigating based on the pedagogical, programmatic, and policy development for L3 language education in Ghana and other contexts. Figure 3.3 illustrates the study's location.



Figure 3.3. Location of Ghana Institute of Languages

Source: Google Maps (2022)

Generating a detailed description of the case often includes its socio-cultural and linguistic environment and a discussion of other individuals with whom the problem interacts (Duff, 2014; Yin, 2014). The researcher's findings or insights based on the case might pertain to the topic under investigation (the development of vocabulary) in the English language as a third language. Against this backdrop, the target population for the study constituted all EFL learners from other countries (such as Turkey, Arabia, Togo, Cape Verde, Namibia, Ivory Coast, Benin, etc.) at the Institute. The total number is seventy (70). There are three schools in the Ghana Institute of Languages: the School of Translators, the School of Languages, and the School of Bilingual Secretaryship. From this population, I choose the School of Languages. The researcher chose this particular school because she identified the problem of the study to be particular to them. Also, it is this school that forms a basis for others to pursue other educational careers and professions, especially in the other two schools. Lastly, they form the basis for the

generalization of the findings of this research. The researcher acknowledges that there are issues associated with the other schools but because they are not really language-inclined, they were excluded from the target sample. Although not all of the population was involved in the research, a considerable sample size was used based on the purpose of the study. The next portion of the study presents the sample size used.

3.4 Sample size and sampling techniques

The sample size is a portion of a target population that is designated for research examination. It is a subset of a larger group in this regard. It is a representation of the population with important characteristics such as gender and age which are distributed proportionately. Sampling is among the most crucial considerations in the convergent parallel design (Dornyei, 2011). When designing the sampling plan, there is the need to take into account feasibility issues; time, money and availability of respondents (Dornyei, 2011). Purposive sampling and census sampling were used in this study. First, there are several Ghana Institute of Languages locations in Ghana such as Kumasi, Tamale, East Legon, and Adabraka. The researcher used purposive sampling to select only East Legon for the study. The reason is that the researcher has taught in this school for a long time and understands the context of teaching which would facilitate interaction and data collection for the study. Also, considering the availability of resources, in terms of finances and the general timeframe for the study, the researcher found it convenient to use the school in East Legon.

Census sampling is a research method that involves collecting data from every individual or unit within a population. This approach is distinct from other research methods, such as sample surveys, which gather data from a subset of the population. This discussion examined the advantages and disadvantages of using census sampling as a research method, its applications in different fields, and the potential challenges

researchers may face when employing this approach (Lavrakas, 2008). Based on the purpose of the study and the intended data collection procedures adopted, the sample size chosen was forty (40). This sample size was chosen based on the sessions that the students attend the classes.

The researcher used all the 40 participants for the collection of data using the questionnaire and 6 students in the focus group discussion. This was because it was more feasible to involve all participants in a questionnaire versus trying to coordinate schedules for a focus group with a large sample. With 40 participants, arranging a time for 6 to meet was more practical. Also, the researcher purposively selected 6 participants from the broader 40 to represent key demographics, subgroups, or perspectives for the focus group. Factors like time, funding, or researcher capacity allowed for distributing questionnaires to all 40 participants but only focus groups with a smaller subset.

The researcher found it appropriate to use the chosen size because it reflects the total number of students in the School of Languages. The census sampling provided a complete dataset for a population, enabling researchers to gain deeper insights into the subject of the study. Since data is collected from the entire population, the census sampling eliminated sampling error, which can be a source of uncertainty in sample surveys (Lohr, 2019). More importantly, it helped me conduct in-depth analyses of specific subgroups within the population, even if they are relatively small, without resorting to additional sampling methods.

3.5 Data collection procedure

Data is an important part of every empirical research. That said, the researcher finds it prudent to discuss the data collection procedures involved in this research. Relating this portion to the research questions and the research approach adopted, the

data collection instruments that were used are a questionnaire and an interview guide for a focus group discussion. The instruments were all used for the students.

3.5.1 Questionnaire

For the questionnaire, confidentiality can also be a disadvantage in data collection. However, this was resolved by ensuring the anonymity of respondents and ensuring that the data was to be used for only the research purpose. This was made known to the respondents in the introductory section of the questionnaire. The data is collected from the natural setting of the participants involved in the study to ensure that the process of the collection is authentic and natural.

The researcher, with the help of a colleague from the institution, administered the questionnaire item to participants. Interestingly, given that the interview session was based on a relatively small number of participants to provide a wider picture of the problem, the questionnaire was administered to thrice the number of participants. The respondents who had challenges with understanding the items on the questionnaires were patiently guided in answering the questions. The researcher's involvement in the process was not to intimidate the respondents but ensure accurate responses and make up for missing data in questionnaires. The data collection process with the questionnaire tool lasted for two working days. Following this, the researcher acknowledged the participants for their responses.

The questionnaire examined vocabulary acquisition by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners at the Ghana Institute of Languages. It comprised four sections gathering data on demographics, learning strategies, challenges, and teaching methods. Section A collected background information on gender, age, English learning experience, and education level. This provided context on the sample population. The wide age range of 20-above 40 encompassed diverse groups of EFL learners. Documenting years

studying English and education level also gave insight into language exposure and proficiency.

Section B explored vocabulary learning strategies through agreement ratings on statements like using multimedia, mobile apps, memorization, reading, relaxation, flashcards, wordlists, and dialogues. This revealed student perspectives on effective techniques. Agreeing that various modalities, reading, and dialogues help indicates awareness of multifaceted acquisition. Section C examined difficulties in vocabulary tasks, understanding new words, pronunciation, memory, listening comprehension, dictionaries, integration with reading, L1 comparison, and synonyms/antonyms. Challenges with these specific skills provided tangible areas for vocabulary instruction to target.

Finally, Section D covered teaching methods via agreement on context use, explanation, effort, attention, dictionaries, enjoyment, repetition, personal experiences. Students critiquing these techniques gave insight into pedagogical areas for improvement. Agreement on helpful practices also informed teaching strategies.

3.5.2 Focus group discussion

The process of data collection with the interview guide was a focus group discussion. The focus group discussion, with six (6) students, was chosen because it helped the researcher acquire varied responses at the same which would relatively save time for the study. In this study, the researcher took considerable time the collection the data for the study. As stipulated earlier, the researcher involved the sample size in a focus group discussion guided by the question. The focus group discussion affords credibility to the responses from the students. This was done to work inductively, building patterns, categories, and themes from the bottom up by organizing the data into increasingly more abstract units of information.

The focus discussion guide was used to obtain natural and direct responses from the participants. This collection procedure was adopted to cater for the predominant experimental studies that have occupied the literature on vocabulary acquisition research as discussed in Chapter 2 of this research. The focus group provided an opportunity to explore questionnaire themes in more depth with a subset of students. Participants shared insights into personal struggles with vocabulary acquisition. Several described difficulties retaining new words and frustration when teachers introduced terms too quickly without sufficient explanation or examples. They emphasized the importance of learning vocabulary in context, not just memorizing lists. Some students felt discouraged when unable to understand words during reading or listening activities. Others noted pronunciation challenges, especially differentiating similar sounding words. Several agreed it was helpful when teachers checked comprehension and defined new vocabulary during and after reading texts.

The focus group was comprised of 6 students purposively selected from the larger sample of 40 questionnaire participants. The goal was to gather more in-depth qualitative insights. Participants were chosen to represent a range of demographics and experiences based on their questionnaire responses. The discussion took place in a quiet classroom with seats arranged in a circle so all participants could see each other. It was scheduled for 30-50 minutes after classes ended. The researcher moderated using a semi-structured guide to stimulate discussion of key questionnaire themes while allowing flexibility for unplanned topics to emerge.

The moderator began by explaining the purpose, establishing ground rules like confidentiality, and encouraging open sharing of diverse perspectives. Participants introduced themselves and their background studying English. The moderator then posed open-ended questions about vocabulary learning strategies, difficulties encountered, and

perspectives on teaching techniques. When needed, they asked follow-up probes to elicit more details and examples. Discussion flowed naturally with students reflecting on personal experiences, responding to others' comments, and having side conversations. The moderator ensured balanced participation by inviting quieter members to contribute. With permission, the session was audio recorded and supplemented by written notes. In closing, the moderator summarized key points and asked if anything important was missed. Participants provided feedback on the process and were thanked for their time. The recording and notes were subsequently analyzed to identify themes aligning with the original questionnaire content as well as any new issues emerging through the group interaction.

On the audio recording, the moderator labelled each speaker's contributions using codes prior to their comments. The codes were based on the classroom and number of selected students; B2.3. That is, B2 is the class and 3 is student number. For example: "Next I'll turn to student B2.1, go ahead" or "C5.2 you mentioned challenges with pronunciation, can you give an example?" In the written transcript, the codes were inserted before the transcribed speech to identify each speaker. The researcher used a verbatim transcription. This is because verbatim transcription provides a more accurate representation of the respondents' response and allows for a more thorough analysis. An orthographic style of transcription that uses standard spelling and punctuation was appropriate here. This made the content more readable. After the transcription and coding, the researcher did a member check with the teachers to ensure that their perspectives were captured appropriately. In cases where there were discrepancies, the researcher rectified them by playing the recordings again and seeking further clarification.

3.6 Validity

Validity refers to the extent to which a measurement or instrument accurately measures what it is intended to measure. It assesses whether the instrument is measuring the concept or construct it claims to measure. Through the assistance of a statistician, the researcher carefully inputted the data from the questionnaire into the SPSS and performed data cleaning to identify and correct any errors or inconsistencies. The researcher double-checked the data entry process to minimize the likelihood of errors. Also, the researcher verified the accuracy of the descriptive statistics (mean, percentages, tables, and frequencies) by cross-checking the results with the raw data. This ensured that the statistical analysis is based on accurate data and improved the validity of the findings.

3.7 Data analysis procedure

Hancock and Algozzine (2006) state that, in mixed-method research, making sense of the information collected from multiple sources is a recursive process in which the researcher interacts with the information throughout the investigative process. However, as a guideline for the analysis procedure, the researcher labels and stores the information acquired during the research process. The audiotaped data collected from the focus group discussion were transcribed into textual data. A thematic analysis was used to interpret the information acquired. The directed thematic analysis is used in this study because it is based on an existing theory (which in this study is the socio-cognitive theory) and there is minimal research conducted on vocabulary acquisition in Ghana. Themes were associated with the information acquired and the codes were used to relate them.

The questionnaire data was analysed quantitatively using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 25.0 for Windows. SPSS allowed for efficient

statistical analysis of the questionnaire responses collected from participants. The primary analysis techniques used were descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. These descriptive techniques were appropriate for summarizing the questionnaire data and examining response patterns based on the directionality of responses on the 5-point Likert scale. Frequencies and percentages of responses for each questionnaire item were tabulated to provide insights into participants' perceptions on different statement prompts about the research topic. Reporting on frequencies illustrated the commonality of responses and revealed majority perspectives. Means and standard deviations were also calculated for pooled questionnaire items to determine central tendencies and dispersion in the responses. This enabled general conclusions to be drawn about average participant attitudes and the variance around the mean.

3.8 Reliability

This study relies on a mixed-method research approach involving qualitative and quantitative data. To assess the reliability of this analysis, it is crucial to consider various aspects, including the consistency of the data collection and analysis methods, as well as the transparency and replicability of the process. First, the reliability of the qualitative data followed a data transcription, inter-coder reliability, and audit trail. The researcher ensured that the transcription process accurately captures the content of the audiotaped interviews. To enhance reliability, the researcher involved an independent reviewer to cross-check the transcriptions against the original recordings, identifying any discrepancies or potential biases. To assess the reliability of the transcription process, the researcher involved multiple coders in the analysis. Through the assistance of a data analyst, we calculated the inter-coder reliability using methods such as Cohen's Kappa,

which helped quantify the agreement between the coders and provide a measure of reliability. The results of the inter-rater are presented in Table 3.8.

Table 3.8. Inter-rater reliability results

Inter-raters	Results
A	81%
B	88%

Table 3.8 presents the inter-rater results. From the results, the researcher achieved reliable results for the transcription at 84.5%, which is appreciable.

Second, for the quantitative aspect of the research, three main reliability tests were conducted: data entry and cleaning, descriptive statistics, and consistency of measures. Finally, the researcher assessed the internal consistency of the questionnaire instrument using Cronbach's Alpha which achieved a 0.81 value. A coefficient of reliability of 0.81 indicates that there is a high level of consistency or agreement among the items or measures being evaluated. In practical terms, this means that if the same instrument were administered to the same group of individuals on multiple occasions, their scores would be expected to be highly consistent.

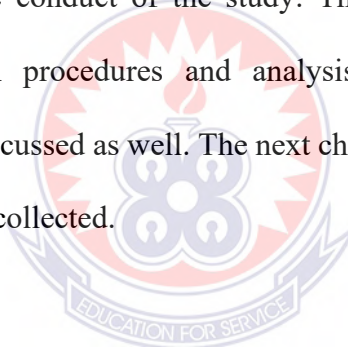
3.9 Ethical consideration

In every empirical research that involves human participants, the researcher needs to consider issues of ethics. According to Neuman (2006), social researchers need to prepare themselves in terms of all ethical issues in the design of a study to build a sound ethical practice. In this study, the researcher adhered strictly to seeking the individual consent of the participants involved in the study. Their voluntary participation was made central to the study. The researcher advised that if anyone felt threatened, uncomfortable,

or reluctant to participate in the study, they could opt out at any time. Before this, the researcher had explained the research purpose and the questions that are to be answered in the study to the participants. Thus, the questions in the interview and the statements on the questionnaire were framed suitably to the interest of the respondents to obtain appropriate responses. Given that the participants already have an established relationship with the researcher, they felt comfortable providing the necessary information. The data collection was carried out on receipt of an ethical clearance from the University of Education, Winneba.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter presented the research methodology. The researcher discussed the procedures adopted in the conduct of the study. This involved the research design, approach, data collection procedures and analysis procedures. Issues of ethical consideration were also discussed as well. The next chapter of this research is the results and discussion of the data collected.



CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis and discussion of the data collected from the participants in this study. The quantitative analysis is illustrated in tables, frequencies, and percentages. Extracts from the interview are attached to the quantitative analysis for discussion. Before presenting the results, the researcher reports on the questionnaire response rate. This chapter is portioned into three main themes which relate to the research questions. The discussion is done in tandem with relevant literature concerning the topic.

4.1 EFL learners' strategies for vocabulary acquisition skills

This theme relates to research question one. For this research theme, the researcher sought to find out the learners' learning strategy for acquiring vocabulary skills. Ten items were included in the questionnaire for this theme. The researcher reports the descriptive statistics of the responses to the items and supports them with percentages from the analysis. This theme is subdivided into two parts: (a) Using hybrid strategies to acquire vocabulary, and (b) Using traditional strategies to acquire vocabulary. After these, a summary is provided.

4.1.1 Using hybrid strategies to acquire vocabulary

In the realm of third language acquisition, vocabulary acquisition plays a crucial role in developing learners' overall language proficiency. The ability to effectively and efficiently acquire new vocabulary is essential for learners to comprehend and produce language accurately. Various strategies have been explored and employed to enhance vocabulary acquisition among third language learners. One emerging subtheme within this domain is the utilization of hybrid strategies, which combine multiple approaches to

optimize vocabulary learning outcomes. Hybrid strategies integrate both traditional and technology-enhanced methods to provide learners with a comprehensive and dynamic learning experience. This sub-theme focuses on the exploration and investigation of using hybrid strategies in acquiring vocabulary, aiming to uncover their effectiveness, advantages, and implications for language learners.

Table 4.1.1. Descriptive statistics of hybrid strategies to acquire vocabulary

Strategies	Percentage					
	Mean	SD	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Total
Learning vocabulary in multiple ways	4.65	.483	0%	0%	100% (40)	100
Using mobile apps for vocabulary knowledge	4.55	.504	0%	0%	100% (40)	100
Relaxing when afraid to learn a new word	3.28	1.396	32.5% (13)	22.5% (9)	45% (18)	100
Acquiring vocabulary through dialogue	3.10	1.446	40% (16)	15% (6)	45% (18)	100
Using students' background knowledge of new words	4.55	.504	0%	0%	100%	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

The first questionnaire item, which assessed the agreement on employing various methods to acquire vocabulary, demonstrated a high mean score of 4.65, indicating a strong consensus among the participants. The low standard deviation of 0.483 further supports this finding, suggesting that the responses were closely clustered around the mean. The participants unanimously agreed with this approach, as indicated by 100% agreement. This robust agreement reflects the learners' recognition and endorsement of the effectiveness of using multiple strategies to enhance their vocabulary acquisition. The frequency distribution reveals that the majority of participants (65%) strongly agreed

with the statement, while 35% agreed. These percentages indicate a significant level of agreement and support for the use of multiple methods in vocabulary acquisition.

The dominance of *agree* and *strongly agree* responses indicates a positive attitude and conviction among the participants regarding the efficacy of employing diverse approaches to learning vocabulary. The findings align with the existing research literature. Kamil and Hiebert (2005) emphasized the importance of employing multiple ways of learning vocabulary to engage students with words and facilitate deeper understanding. By utilizing various methods, learners can explore different dimensions of vocabulary, such as meaning, usage, and context, leading to a more comprehensive and holistic grasp of the language. Moreover, Diamond and Gutlohn (2006) suggest that employing multiple strategies for vocabulary learning enhances students' proficiency in using words effectively and accurately, ultimately leading to improved language skills.

Concerning the multiple strategies for learning vocabulary, the themes that evolved from the focus group discussion were insightful and aligned with the quantitative results. The following analysis focuses on the interview responses regarding the questions, *When learning vocabulary, do you write them down?* and *How do you manage to keep track of all the words that come up during questions?* The objective is to identify common themes and strategies used by the respondents to learn and retain new vocabulary. The themes that were identified were writing down new vocabulary, memorization, and using new vocabulary in context. The following illustrate the responses.

First of all, I write them down and later I look for their meaning and keep them
(B1. 5).

Sometimes, I write it (B1.1).

I write them down and try to memorise them so I don't forget (B1. 3).

I always write down the words I don't want to forget (B1. 2).

Yes, I write them down and try to use them in sentences (B1. 4).

For me, when I hear the word, it sticks to my mind. I don't have to write them down or memorise them (B1. 6).

The majority of the respondents (B1. 5, B1. 1, B1. 2) mentioned that they write down new words as part of their vocabulary-learning strategy. This suggests that writing is a widely used technique to keep track of and reinforce learning of new vocabulary. Some respondents (B1. 3 and B1.5) mentioned looking up the meanings of new words and memorizing them as part of their strategy. This indicates that understanding the meaning and retaining it through memorization is an important aspect of vocabulary learning for these individuals. Two respondents (B1. 4 and B1. 6) mentioned using new words in sentences or relying on the context in which they encountered the words. This suggests that incorporating new vocabulary into meaningful contexts can help with retention and understanding. The analysis of the interview responses revealed that writing down new vocabulary is a common strategy employed by the majority of the respondents. Additionally, looking up meanings, memorizing, and using new words in context are also important aspects of vocabulary learning for some individuals. These findings can provide useful insights for educators and language learners on effective vocabulary learning strategies.

On item 2, the learners expressed strong concern about using mobile apps to learn vocabulary. This item had a mean of 4.55 and a standard deviation of .504 indicating a strong confirmation of the response. The frequency distribution revealed that 45% and 55% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed with the statement respectively. That is, all participants (100%) agreed that using mobile apps can help build vocabulary knowledge. There is a growing body of literature on using mobile apps to learn

vocabulary skills in a foreign or second language. For instance, Rezaei et al. (2014) found a positive change in learners' performance which indicated enhanced learning of vocabulary and class participation. Deng and Trainin (2015) contend that mobile apps could be used to enhance vocabulary acquisition. Klimova (2021) reported that most EFL students use mobile apps as support for their vocabulary acquisition.

Using mobile apps in learning vocabulary provides self-direction in the acquisition process (Deris & Shukor, 2019). In Ghana, mobile apps have been investigated from a broad perspective in teaching and learning (Twum, 2017; Yeboah & Ewur, 2014), rather than vocabulary acquisition which makes this finding new. Deducing on the results and the supporting literature, the use of mobile apps as a strategy for learning vocabulary is useful for learners. As such mobile technologies in education are fast growing which requires adoption and strengthening in language learning. Some of the interview responses supported this view. The interview responses support this view.

The second question targeted the use of digital technologies and online services to learn vocabulary. This question also revealed three themes from the responses: utilizing language learning applications, exploring multimedia online services, and using traditional methods. The first theme that emerged from the participants' responses was the use of language learning applications. Many interviewees reported utilizing various mobile or web-based applications specifically designed for language learning. These applications often provide interactive exercises, flashcards, pronunciation guides, and vocabulary quizzes. The participants acknowledged the benefits of these applications in terms of accessibility, interactivity, and the ability to track their progress. The second theme that surfaced from the interview question was the exploration of multimedia online services. Several respondents mentioned incorporating multimedia platforms, such as videos, podcasts, and online tutorials, into their vocabulary learning process. These

platforms offer engaging and dynamic content, allowing learners to practice vocabulary in real-life contexts and gain exposure to authentic language usage. Interestingly, the third theme that emerged from the participants' responses was the continued use of traditional methods for vocabulary learning. Despite the availability of digital technologies and online resources, some interviewees expressed a preference for traditional methods, such as reading books, using dictionaries, and writing vocabulary lists. The responses are presented as follows:

Yes. I use Duolingo to learn some new words and also to listen to the pronunciation of the word (B1. 1).

Yes. I use Duolingo and YouTube (B2. 2).

I used to use them but now I don't. But first, I used Duolingo and British English Council (B1. 3).

Sometimes, I use Google Translate for the hard words (B1. 4).

I use Duolingo. It is very helpful in learning new words, pronunciation and meaning (C1.2).

I just use what I study in class and use dictionaries to find the meaning. I don't use any other digital or online platform (B2. 4).

A majority of respondents (B1. 1, B2. 2, and C1.2) mentioned using Duolingo, a popular language learning application, to learn new words, practice pronunciation, and understand the meaning of new vocabulary. This suggests that language learning applications like Duolingo are widely used and considered helpful in vocabulary learning. Several existing pieces of literature have revealed the significance of Duolingo in students' vocabulary learning process (Ajisoko, 2020; Muddin, 2018; Munday, 2017; Tiara et al., 2021). Muddin (2018) reports that several positive effects can be achieved by using Duolingo in English classes, including increasing the motivation of students;

making the material easier to understand; allowing all students to practice the material in equal amounts; eliminating boredom in learning; encouraging new ideas; assisting students in remembering and practising the material in everyday life (Irawan et al., 2020).

Also, some respondents (B2. 2, B1. 3, and B1. 4) mentioned using additional online resources, such as YouTube, British English Council, and Google Translate, to support their vocabulary learning. This indicates that a variety of digital platforms and tools can contribute to the vocabulary learning experience. One respondent (B2. 4) mentioned not using any digital or online platforms, instead relying on classroom learning and dictionaries to learn new vocabulary. This suggests that some learners may still prefer traditional methods of learning vocabulary. The analysis of the interview responses revealed that digital and online resources, such as language learning applications like Duolingo and multimedia platforms like YouTube, are commonly used by learners to support vocabulary learning. However, some learners still rely on traditional methods, such as dictionaries and classroom instruction. These findings provide valuable insights for language learners on the diverse range of resources available for vocabulary learning and the potential benefits of integrating digital tools into language learning processes.

The third item in the questionnaire aimed to explore the learners' inclination towards relaxation during the vocabulary acquisition process. The results indicated a lower mean score of 3.28, suggesting a more neutral response compared to the other questionnaire items. The higher standard deviation of 1.396 suggests greater variability and diverse opinions among the participants regarding the effectiveness of relaxation in vocabulary acquisition. The distribution of responses shows that 45% of participants agreed with the approach, indicating that they found relaxation to be beneficial when acquiring new words. On the other hand, 32.5% of participants disagreed, implying that

they did not perceive relaxation as a helpful strategy. Additionally, 22.5% of participants remained neutral, indicating a lack of consensus on the matter.

The varied opinions and the neutral stance of participants suggest that learners have differing perspectives on the role of relaxation in vocabulary acquisition. Some learners may believe that a relaxed state of mind facilitates better concentration and retention, enabling them to absorb and retain new words more effectively. They may find that stress and tension hinder their ability to focus and remember new vocabulary items. Conversely, other learners may hold the view that a more active and engaged approach, characterized by focused effort and concentration, leads to better vocabulary acquisition. They may believe that relaxation could lead to reduced motivation or a lack of necessary effort, potentially hampering their learning outcomes.

The frequency distribution provides insights into the respondents' attitudes towards using relaxation as a strategy for learning new words. The percentages indicate the distribution of responses among the participants. According to the data, 12.5% of the respondents strongly disagreed, 20% disagreed, 22.5% were neutral, 17.5% agreed, and 27.5% strongly agreed that they try to relax when afraid to learn new words. To further understand the implications of these findings, we can refer to the research conducted by Ashraf et al. (2014). Their study emphasizes the significance of creating a relaxed, motivating, and enjoyable environment for effective vocabulary acquisition. When learners are in a relaxed state, they are more likely to concentrate on the new words they encounter.

Despite the fact that a considerable portion of the respondents were uncertain about the efficacy of relaxation in vocabulary acquisition, it can be inferred that relaxation does indeed have a role to play in the process. This deduction is based on the premise that creating a relaxed environment facilitates learning, as indicated by the

research mentioned earlier. While some participants expressed disagreement or uncertainty regarding the relationship between relaxation and vocabulary acquisition, the fact that a significant portion agreed or strongly agreed suggests that there is a potential benefit in incorporating relaxation techniques into language learning practices. The data indicate that a considerable number of respondents recognize the value of relaxation when feeling fearful or hesitant about learning new words.

The findings relate to the use of dialogue as a means of facilitating vocabulary acquisition among EFL learners in the GIL context indicate mixed opinions and varied perceptions. Among the participants, 17.5% strongly disagreed, 22.5% disagreed, 15% remained neutral, and 22.5% agreed and strongly agreed with the effectiveness of dialogue in vocabulary acquisition. The relatively high percentages of disagreement and strong disagreement suggest that a significant proportion of participants do not consider dialogue to be an effective approach for enhancing their vocabulary skills. This might imply that they have reservations or doubts about the efficacy of dialogue in vocabulary acquisition. On the other hand, a noteworthy percentage of respondents (22.5%) agreed and strongly agreed with the effectiveness of dialogue. These participants recognize and endorse the benefits of using dialogue as a tool for acquiring vocabulary. Their agreement indicates that they perceive dialogue as a valuable means of learning new words and integrating them into meaningful communication.

This statement had the highest measure of spread of 1.446 indicating a varied distribution of responses. The mean was 3.10 and does not indicate the direction of the influence of dialogue on vocabulary acquisition. This could be that the learners communicate or engage in dialogue activities in their first language (L1) rather than the foreign language (L3). This creates indifference to the effect dialogue has on vocabulary acquisition. That notwithstanding, dialogue as a learning technique has been frequently

studied over the past few decades. The inclusion of purposeful talk and dialogue in vocabulary acquisition is a valuable approach supported by research. Nichols (2008) defines purposeful talk as a social process where individuals actively engage with ideas, think out loud together, and collaboratively construct meaning.

Within this context, vocabulary acquisition can be fostered through meaningful interactions and discussions. The findings of this research align with the notion that purposeful talk and dialogue play a significant role in vocabulary acquisition. Ahmadian et al. (2014) also support this perspective in their work. Their research emphasizes the importance of engaging learners in conversations that involve the use of vocabulary and promote active participation. Such dialogues provide opportunities for learners to practice using new words in authentic contexts, reinforce their understanding, and develop language skills. In so doing, educators can create an interactive and communicative learning environment. This approach encourages learners to actively engage with words, express their thoughts, and negotiate meaning with their peers. Through discussions and co-construction of ideas, learners can deepen their understanding of vocabulary and enhance their language proficiency.

Finally, the researcher sought to find out how the learners' background knowledge contributed to the strategies of acquiring new words. The item received a high mean score of 4.55, suggesting that utilizing background knowledge is perceived as an effective and valuable strategy for vocabulary acquisition. The unanimous agreement among all participants (100%) further supports the notion that learners recognize the importance of leveraging their prior knowledge in the process of acquiring new words. This indicates that the participants strongly believe that their background knowledge can significantly contribute to their vocabulary learning. The distribution of responses on the

Likert scale reflects a high level of agreement, with 55% of participants strongly agreeing and 45% agreeing with the statement.

This demonstrates a shared understanding among the learners that their existing knowledge and experiences play a crucial role in learning new vocabulary. The alignment between the research findings and previous studies strengthens the validity of the results. Rapaport (2003) emphasized the significance of providing learners with a proper context that connects to their prior knowledge for effective vocabulary acquisition. Joe (1998) analysed background knowledge and vocabulary, confirming the positive effects of leveraging prior knowledge. Similarly, Akagawa (1995) found that background knowledge relevant to the content of a text positively influenced vocabulary acquisition. The findings from the present research resonate with these previous studies, reinforcing the importance of background knowledge in vocabulary learning.

4.1.2 Using traditional strategies to acquire vocabulary

Concerning the traditional strategies for vocabulary learning, a multitude of strategies have been employed and explored to facilitate the acquisition of vocabulary among EFL language learners. While technological advancements have brought new possibilities to language learning, traditional strategies continue to play a vital role in vocabulary acquisition. This sub-theme focuses on the utilization of traditional strategies in acquiring vocabulary, highlighting their relevance, effectiveness, and pedagogical implications in second language learning contexts (Min, 2008). Traditional strategies encompass a range of techniques such as explicit instruction, rote memorization, word lists, context-based learning, and mnemonic devices. These time-tested approaches have proven to be valuable in fostering vocabulary development by providing learners with structured and systematic methods to expand their lexical repertoire.

For the first item on this theme, memorization as a vocabulary learning strategy has received varied concerns in the EFL literature. In the present research, this strategy has a mean score of 4.35 and an SD of 0.483, indicating that it is effective and well-accepted among the participants. All participants (100%) agreed that memorizing vocabulary is an important aspect of vocabulary acquisition. From the frequency results, 65% of the learners 'agreed' while 35% 'strongly agreed'. Similar to the present report, Appiah-Baidoo (2018) found that 56% of participants in his study used memorization to learn new vocabulary. In contrast to the present research, Rashidi and Omid (2011) reported that EFL learners in Iran preferred more meaning-oriented learning than memorization as a rote learning strategy of vocabulary acquisition. Nielsen (2003) observed that memorization involves great effort in learning vocabulary which makes it unpopular among learners. Nonetheless, Khoii and Sharififar (2013) debunked the criticisms against memorization and stated that it is a useful strategy for acquiring vocabulary. Additionally, Yang and Dai (2011) reported that EFL learners in China preferred memorization to other strategies for acquiring vocabulary. From this perspective, the present research provides the significance of the preference of EFL learners in GIL using memorization as a learning strategy for vocabulary acquisition.

Reading and vocabulary acquisition has been correlated by researchers for decades. The researcher identified that 'acquiring vocabulary through reading' achieved a high mean score of 4.60 and an SD of 0.496, showing a high level of effectiveness and strong agreement among participants. All participants (100%) agreed that reading is a valuable method for learning new vocabulary.

Table 4.1.2. Descriptive statistics of traditional strategies to acquire vocabulary

Strategies	Percentage					
	Mean	SD	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Total
Memorizing vocabulary	4.35	.483	0%	0%	100%	100 (40)
Acquiring vocabulary through reading	4.60	.496	0%	0%	100%	100 (40)
Using flashcards to learn new words	2.57	1.357	45% (18)	30% (12)	25% (10)	100
Using wordlists to memorize new words	4.55	.504	0%	0%	100%	100 (40)
Reading facilitates vocabulary acquisition	4.45	.504	0%	0%	100%	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

Interestingly, 60% of the respondents indicated ‘strongly agree’ while 40% indicated ‘agree’. The responses reflect and support the literature on reading and vocabulary acquisition. Pigada and Schmitt (2006) established a positive correlation between vocabulary acquisition and reading. For Krashen (2013), there are several pieces of evidence to support the relationship between reading and vocabulary acquisition. What is unclear is whether learners read to acquire vocabulary or they acquire vocabulary to assist in their reading. From this research, learners acquire vocabulary through their reading activities. Brown et al. (2008) report that English vocabulary was acquired during reading when they explored the vocabulary acquisition of learners. The researcher found similar responses for questionnaire item 9 which sought to ascertain the influence of reading on vocabulary acquisition. The item also had a mean of 4.45 and a standard deviation of .504 which revolves around the agreement on ‘reading facilitating vocabulary acquisition’ among the learners in GIL.

Aside from reading and memorization, flashcards and wordlists are other strategies that are used in learning vocabulary. Questionnaire items 3 and 4 explored the learners' use of flashcards and wordlists as vocabulary learning strategies. While the use of flashcards was unpopular among the learners (mean = 2.57, signifying disagreement; and a standard deviation of 1.357, indicating a high spread in responses), wordlists as a vocabulary learning strategy were commonly used by the learners (mean = 4.55, which agrees; and a low measure of spread of .504). Figure 4.2 is a bar chart representing the frequency analysis on flashcards.

The findings regarding the use of flashcards as a vocabulary learning strategy in the context of EFL learners in the GIL (Global Integrated Learning) setting reveal interesting insights into their perceptions and preferences. The results indicate that flashcards are not commonly employed by the majority of participants, as a significant proportion expressed their disapproval or lack of enthusiasm towards this strategy (Nation, 2008). Specifically, the data revealed that 32.5% of participants strongly disagreed and 12.5% disagreed with the use of flashcards for vocabulary acquisition.

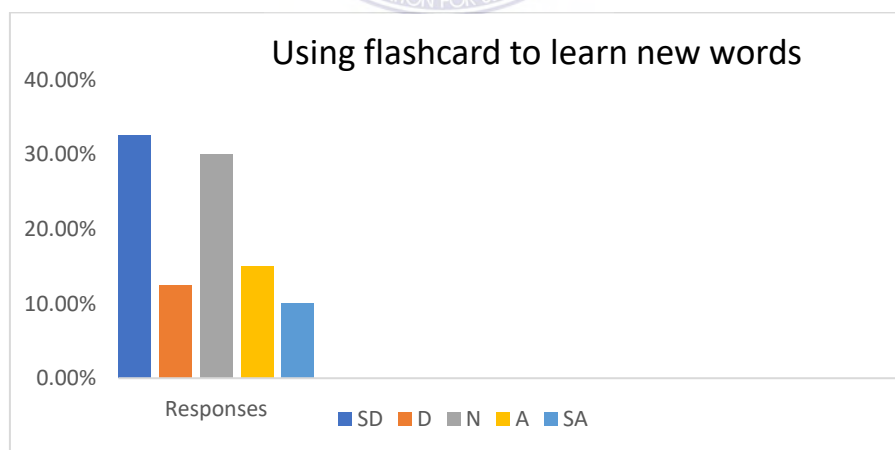


Figure 4.1.2. Responses on research item 6

This substantial percentage of disagreement suggests that a considerable number of EFL learners in the GIL context do not consider flashcards to be an effective or preferred method for learning vocabulary. Furthermore, 30% of respondents remained neutral,

indicating a lack of enthusiasm or familiarity with this particular strategy. In contrast, a smaller percentage of participants, comprising 15% and 10% respectively, agreed and strongly agreed with the use of flashcards for vocabulary acquisition. Although these proportions are lower compared to the disagreement, they still highlight a minority who recognize the potential benefits of flashcards in enhancing vocabulary learning.

These findings present a contrast to previous research (e.g., Bueno-Alastuey & Nemeth, 2022; Hung, 2015; Zainuddin & Idrus, 2016) that has emphasized the advantages of flashcards in vocabulary acquisition. Studies have indicated that flashcards can promote active engagement, repetition, and retrieval practice, leading to improved retention and retrieval of vocabulary items. However, despite the existing evidence supporting the efficacy of flashcards, the participants in this study do not commonly utilize this strategy in their learning practices. Further research is warranted to delve deeper into the reasons behind the disapproval or lack of enthusiasm towards flashcards among EFL learners in the GIL setting.

On the other hand, the use of wordlists as a vocabulary learning strategy garnered more positive responses. A total of 45% of respondents agreed, while 55% strongly agreed with the use of wordlists for vocabulary acquisition. This indicates that a majority of participants recognize the value and effectiveness of wordlists as a tool for expanding their vocabulary. These findings align with the research conducted by Coşgun (2016), further reinforcing the positive impact of using wordlists for vocabulary development. The literature, as exemplified by Atay and Ozabulgan (2007), emphasizes the importance of teachers encouraging students to employ memory strategies, such as wordlists, to enhance their vocabulary learning. The present research findings provide evidence to support this assertion, as a significant number of participants agreed and strongly agreed with the effectiveness of wordlists in facilitating vocabulary acquisition. The disparity

between the usage and perception of flashcards and wordlists as vocabulary learning strategies may be attributed to several factors. It could be related to learners' preferences, familiarity, and personal experiences with these strategies. It is also possible that the teaching context or instructional practices in the GIL setting do not emphasize the use of flashcards as extensively as other strategies.

The results on the final item for this subtheme showed that all the participants (100%) agreed that reading facilitated their vocabulary acquisition. The unanimous agreement on the facilitative role of reading is encouraging. The results indicate that reading plays a significant role in facilitating vocabulary acquisition among the participants. The mean score of 4.45 suggests a strong agreement among the respondents regarding the positive impact of reading on vocabulary learning (Smith et al., 2023). This finding aligns with previous research that has consistently highlighted the link between reading and vocabulary development (Nagy & Herman, 1987; Nation, 2001). Reading provides learners with exposure to a wide range of words in context, allowing them to encounter new vocabulary and observe its usage in authentic situations. Through extensive reading, learners have the opportunity to encounter unfamiliar words multiple times, reinforcing their understanding and retention. Moreover, reading helps learners develop their inferencing skills, enabling them to deduce the meaning of words from the context and expand their vocabulary knowledge (Nagy & Anderson, 1984). The 100% agreement among the participants further emphasizes the unanimous perception that reading is a valuable tool for vocabulary acquisition. This result indicates that the learners in this study recognize and appreciate the benefits of reading in enhancing their vocabulary skills. Educators need to recognize the significance of reading and incorporate it into vocabulary instruction. By providing learners with interesting and engaging reading materials, teachers can create opportunities for meaningful encounters

with new words. Additionally, guiding learners in effective reading strategies, such as using context clues or keeping a vocabulary journal, can further enhance vocabulary acquisition during reading activities (Graves, 2006; Nation, 2009).

Sometimes, 12 or 14 words (B1. 1).

If I want to learn it well, it is just five or three (B1. 2).

When I used to learn vocabulary well, it was 35 words. Now I don't constantly learn vocabulary (B2. 3).

The third interview question focused on the number of words that the EFL learners learn in a week through reading. Although the responses were varied, they pointed to some improvements in the learning strategies. The objective is to understand the respondents' self-reported rate of vocabulary learning and identify any patterns or trends among the responses. While the responses varied significantly, some participants reported a consistent and structured approach to learning new words. They indicated that they set specific goals and allocated dedicated time for vocabulary learning each week. These individuals demonstrated a proactive attitude towards expanding their vocabulary and expressed a strong commitment to regular study habits. On the other hand, some respondents indicated a more sporadic approach to vocabulary learning (Kwarteng, 2023). They reported irregular study habits and learning new words only when necessary or when they encountered them in their reading or conversations. A noteworthy trend that emerged from the responses was the reliance on context and immersion for vocabulary acquisition. Several participants emphasized the importance of encountering new words in authentic contexts, such as through reading books or watching movies. The following remarks are provided:

I can't count but I can say more than 10 words a week (B1. 4).

I am not sure but I think 20 (B1. 5).

Sometimes, 10 and sometimes 5. It depends (C1. 6).

The interview responses reveal a wide range of vocabulary learning rates, from as low as 3 to 5 words per week (B1. 2) to as high as 35 words per week (B2. 3). Other respondents reported learning between 10 and 20 words per week (B1. 1, B1. 4, B1. 5, and C1. 6). Some respondents indicated that their rate of vocabulary learning is variable and depends on factors such as personal motivation or commitment to learning (B2. 3) and external circumstances (C1. 6). This suggests that vocabulary learning rates may be influenced by various factors and can fluctuate over time. One respondent (B1. 2) mentioned that they prefer to learn fewer words (three or five) to ensure better understanding and retention. This highlights the importance of focusing on quality over quantity when it comes to vocabulary learning, as mastering a few words well may be more beneficial than learning many words superficially (Stoffelsma, 2020). The analysis of the interview responses revealed a wide range of self-reported vocabulary learning rates among the respondents, with some variability and fluctuations depending on individual motivation, commitment, and circumstances. The findings also suggest that focusing on quality over quantity in vocabulary learning may be an important consideration for some learners.

4.1.3 Summary

In summary, the analysis, results and discussion of the first research objective revealed insight findings concerning EFL learners' strategies for vocabulary acquisition skills. The learners confirmed that they use multiple methods to assist in their vocabulary acquisition. Of these methods, the EFL learners mostly used mobile apps, memorization, reading, and wordlists. Also, the background knowledge of learners was helpful to facilitate their vocabulary acquisition in the English language. One significant finding is that EFL learners utilize multiple strategies to support their vocabulary acquisition. The

participants mentioned using various methods such as mobile apps, memorization, reading, and wordlists. This demonstrates their proactive engagement in seeking out different tools and techniques to expand their vocabulary repertoire. The diversity of strategies suggests that learners are actively exploring and adopting methods that align with their individual preferences and learning styles. Another noteworthy finding is the role of background knowledge in facilitating vocabulary acquisition. This highlights the importance of leveraging prior knowledge to make connections and associations with new words. Building upon their existing vocabulary knowledge allows learners to contextualize and comprehend new words more effectively. The utilization of mobile apps as a vocabulary-learning resource indicates the growing influence of technology in language learning. Mobile apps provide learners with convenient and accessible platforms to engage with vocabulary exercises, quizzes, flashcards, and interactive learning activities. The availability of such apps allows learners to engage in independent study and practice at their own pace and convenience, thereby promoting self-directed learning. Educators can leverage these insights to design effective instructional practices that cater to learners' preferences and support their vocabulary acquisition goals. The next research theme focuses on the challenges EFL learners encounter in vocabulary acquisition.

4.2 Challenges EFL learners encounter in vocabulary acquisition skills

This theme concerns research question two where the researcher provides the results for the challenges EFL learners encounter in vocabulary acquisition. The researcher emphasizes that vocabulary acquisition is a challenging skill for EFL learners. Vocabulary acquisition is essential because it plays a significant role in developing communicative competence in a foreign language. However, many EFL learners encounter various challenges in acquiring new vocabulary, which can impede their

progress in learning the language. These challenges can range from difficulty in translating new words to the first language to problems with acquiring new words through dictionaries.

4.2.1 Challenges with Phonology and Morphology

Acquiring vocabulary in a third language involves various challenges, particularly in the realms of morphology and phonology. Understanding the intricate relationship between morphology, the study of word structure and formation, and phonology, the study of sounds in a language is crucial for effective vocabulary acquisition. This sub-theme focuses on the difficulties learners encounter in relation to morphology and phonology when acquiring new vocabulary. Morphology poses challenges for language learners as they navigate the complex system of affixes, roots, and word formation rules. Phonology, on the other hand, presents challenges related to the pronunciation and phonetic characteristics of words. The results are presented in Table 4.2.1.

Table 4.2.1. Descriptive statistics of challenges with phonology and morphology

Challenges	Percentage					
	Mean	SD	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Total
Unclear sounds affecting vocabulary acquisition	1.97	.832	67.5%	32.5%	0%	100
Not hearing new words when teacher speaks fast	1.98	.862	65%	35%	0%	100
Acquiring new words through dictionary	4.63	.490	0%	0%	100%	100
Treating new vocabularies before, during and after reading	4.45	.504	0%	0%	100%	100
Using synonyms and antonyms to learn vocabulary	4.45	.504	0%	0%	100%	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

The first item is unclear sounds affecting vocabulary acquisition. The mean score for this challenge was 1.97, indicating that it is also a significant challenge for EFL learners. Most participants (67.5%) disagreed that unclear sounds affected their vocabulary acquisition, while 32.5% remained neutral. The disagreement among the majority of participants suggests that they do not find unclear sounds to be a significant hindrance to their vocabulary acquisition. However, it is important to note that a notable percentage of learners remain neutral, indicating that they may be unsure or have mixed experiences regarding the impact of unclear sounds on their vocabulary learning. Unclear sounds affecting vocabulary acquisition can stem from several factors. One primary factor is the pronunciation differences between the learners' first language and English. Different languages have distinct sound systems and phonetic patterns, and when learners encounter sounds that do not exist in their native language, they may struggle to produce or recognize them accurately (Kang & Kim, 2017). This can impede their ability to grasp the correct pronunciation of new words, which in turn affects their vocabulary acquisition. Additionally, learners who are unfamiliar with the sounds of the English language may find it challenging to understand and remember the pronunciation of new words. English contains a wide range of vowel and consonant sounds that may be unfamiliar to EFL learners, making it difficult for them to perceive and differentiate between similar sounds (Odinokaya et al., 2021). This lack of familiarity with the sounds of English can hinder their ability to accurately reproduce and recognize the sounds of new words, leading to difficulties in vocabulary acquisition. In a study by Kang and Kim (2017), EFL learners reported that they had difficulty acquiring vocabulary due to pronunciation errors. Mispronouncing words can affect learners' ability to recognize and remember the correct form of the word, which can impede their overall vocabulary acquisition process. The focus group discussion revealed the following responses:

I can't distinguish all the different sounds, so I'm not sure what the word is.

(C2.2)

Some sounds seem unclear to me, which makes it hard to learn new terms. (C1.4)

I struggle to hear it correctly when the teacher says it. The unclear sounds really affect my ability to learn new words. (A2.1)

The students' feedback indicates unclear sounds in new vocabulary words create acquisition difficulties. Students C2.2, C1.4, and A2.1 all noted problems distinguishing sounds in unfamiliar terms, which hinders learning. However, the quantitative finding indicated that 67.5% of learners said unclear sounds did not affect vocabulary uptake. There is the need to probe deeper into such discrepancies in further studies. This is because providing clear enunciation and repetition could improve comprehension (Kang & Kim, 2017).

The analysis of the second item, which addresses the challenge of not hearing new words when the teacher speaks fast, reveals that EFL learners consider this challenge to be relatively minor, as indicated by the mean score of 1.98. The majority of participants (65%) disagreed with this statement, while 35% remained neutral. This highlights the importance of clear and accessible instruction in language learning, as learners may struggle to keep up with a fast-paced classroom environment. Not hearing new words when the teacher speaks fast can be a common challenge faced by language learners, particularly in a classroom setting where instruction may be delivered at a rapid pace. Learners need to have clear and accessible instruction to effectively acquire new vocabulary (Gu & Johnson, 1996). When the teacher speaks too quickly, learners may struggle to process and comprehend the spoken language, resulting in missed opportunities to hear and learn new words. This could be due to inadequate exposure to the spoken language or a limited ability to process spoken language quickly. To address

the challenge of not hearing new words when the teacher speaks fast, several strategies have been suggested (Field, 2008). One effective approach is for the teacher to use slower speech and clear pronunciation when introducing new vocabulary. By speaking at a moderate pace, learners have a better chance of hearing and comprehending the words being presented. Additionally, the use of visual aids such as pictures, gestures, or written words can provide additional support and context, helping learners to associate the spoken words with their visual representations. A research by Field (2008) supports the use of visual aids and slower speech in addressing the challenge of not hearing new words when the teacher speaks fast. The integration of visual elements alongside spoken language can enhance comprehension and reinforce the connection between the auditory input and visual representations of vocabulary items. The following responses support the quantitative findings:

Our teacher introduces vocabulary words really quickly. When she says the new words fast, I often can't hear what the word actually is. (B1.1)

When the teacher rapidly says a new vocab word, I don't have time to fully hear what the word sounds like. (C2.3)

The fast speaking makes it difficult for me to hear the words. (B1.2)

The students' responses indicate the teacher's rapid pace when introducing new vocabulary makes it challenging to fully perceive the words. Students B1.1, C2.3, and B1.2 all mentioned difficulty hearing new terms when spoken quickly. This contradicts the quantitative data showing 65% of learners struggle to hear new words when teachers speak fast during vocabulary instruction. Slowing the pace would aid comprehension (Field, 2008).

It is interesting to note that two challenges related to using dictionaries and other reference materials, namely "acquiring new words through dictionary" and "treating new

vocabularies before, during, and after reading”, had high mean scores (4.63 and 4.45, respectively). All participants (100%) agreed with “acquiring new words through dictionary” and “treating new vocabularies before, during, and after reading”. This may suggest that learners are heavily reliant on dictionaries and other reference materials, which could be indicative of a lack of confidence or proficiency in their own abilities to acquire new vocabulary. Specifically, acquiring new words through a dictionary is also a challenge, with a mean score of 4.63, indicating that learners do not find dictionaries useful in their vocabulary acquisition process. This might be because learners struggle with understanding the meanings and nuances of new words provided in the dictionary, or they might not know how to effectively use the dictionary to their advantage. Additionally, relying on dictionaries alone might not be sufficient for vocabulary acquisition as it does not provide enough context for learners to fully understand the usage of new words. The use of a dictionary has been widely studied as a method of vocabulary acquisition. The focus group responses support the findings acquiring new words through dictionaries.

Seeing the word spelled out along with the pronunciation guide is really useful.

(B2.2)

I don't feel rushed looking them up on my own. (A2.2)

This strategy works well for me. (C2.4)

The students' feedback highlights the value of utilizing dictionaries to learn new vocabulary words. Students B2.2 and C2.4 noted dictionaries allow them to see the spelling and pronunciation at their own pace, which aids acquisition. Student A2.2 mentioned not feeling rushed looking up terms independently. The responses reinforce the quantitative finding (100%) that dictionaries help students effectively learn new vocabulary.

Research has shown that using a dictionary can enhance learners' ability to remember new words and improve their reading comprehension (Hulstijn et al., 1996). However, the effectiveness of using a dictionary depends on several factors, such as the learner's proficiency level and the type of dictionary used (Kuo & Anderson, 2010). Concerning treating new vocabulary, this challenge could reflect the learners' lack of effective strategies to learn new vocabulary while reading. It might also indicate that learners struggle to focus on vocabulary acquisition while reading, as they might be more focused on the content of the text. Studies have shown that pre-teaching new vocabulary can enhance reading comprehension and improve learners' ability to recall new words (Schmitt & Meara, 1997). Teachers design their vocabulary lessons strategically, creating multiple activities for each set of words, and teaching words before students read texts or during teacher read-aloud sessions. Concerning the treatment of vocabularies before, during and after lessons, the students stated that:

Learning new vocab words before, during, and after we read a text has really improved my understanding of words. (C1.1)

The repetition aids my learning. (A2.5)

The students' responses indicate that encountering vocabulary words multiple times before, during, and after reading texts helps reinforce the meanings and improves retention (C1.1 and A2.5). The repetition through different contexts aids the learning process. This aligns with the quantitative data showing 100% agreement that treating vocabularies before, during, and after lessons is beneficial.

Finally, the use of synonyms and antonyms as a strategy for learning vocabulary presents its own set of challenges, as indicated by the mean score of 4.45 and the unanimous agreement among participants (100%). This finding suggests that learners encounter difficulties when attempting to employ synonyms and antonyms in their

vocabulary acquisition efforts. One possible reason for this challenge is the learners' lack of familiarity with synonyms and antonyms. Inaccurate or ineffective usage of synonyms and antonyms can hinder the learning process and lead to misunderstandings. Without a solid understanding of the subtle differences in meaning between words, learners may struggle to choose appropriate synonyms or antonyms for new vocabulary items. Comparing new vocabulary to words in the learners' first language can be a valuable strategy for deepening their understanding of the target language. Some of the learners mentioned that:

I use the dictionary to find meaning and similar words (C2.3)

I ask the teacher to provide other words (B1.3)

I watch some videos (B1.5).

Laufer (2003) emphasizes the significance of relating new words to familiar terms in the first language, as it helps learners grasp the nuances and connotations of the target language. Moreover, the use of synonyms and antonyms can contribute to vocabulary acquisition by providing learners with contextual understanding. Qian and Schedl (2004) highlight the role of synonyms and antonyms in enhancing learners' comprehension of words within a specific context. By exploring synonyms and antonyms, learners gain insights into the relationships between words and their contextual usage. In the context of vocabulary instruction, it is essential to carefully plan and provide effective guidance. Beck et al. (2002) and Carlo et al. (2005) stress the importance of well-structured and purposeful instruction within the constraints of a limited schedule.

4.2.2 Challenges in understanding

Understanding and comprehension can pose challenges to vocabulary acquisition. The ability to comprehend the meaning of words and their usage in context is essential for effective language proficiency. This sub-theme focuses on the difficulties learners encounter in understanding and comprehending new vocabulary items when acquiring a second language. Understanding and comprehending vocabulary involves more than just memorizing words. Learners must navigate the complexities of language, including connotations. Additionally, the context in which words are used plays a vital role in their interpretation and comprehension. The comprehension challenges in acquiring vocabulary have implications for learners' overall language proficiency and communication skills. The results are presented in Table 4.2.2.

Table 4.2.2. Descriptive statistics of challenges in understanding

Challenges	Percentage					
	Mean	SD	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Total
Finding it challenging to understand meaning of new words	2.00	.847	65% (26)	35% (14)	0%	100
Forgetting old words when learning new words	1.92	.730	77.5% (31)	22.5% (9)	0%	100
Translating new words to L1 is difficult	1.82	.813	75% (30)	25% (10)	0%	100
Treating new vocabularies before, during and after reading	4.45	.504	0%	0%	100% (40)	100
Comparing new vocabularies to L1	4.43	.501	0%	0%	100% (40)	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

The first and most challenging aspect is *understanding the meaning of new words*. This challenge had a mean score of 2.00, which suggests that it is also a significant challenge for EFL learners. The majority of participants (65%) disagreed with this challenge, while 35% remained neutral. However, it is important to note that despite the disagreement among the majority of participants, there is still a notable percentage of learners who find understanding the meaning of new words to be a significant challenge. The disagreement among the majority of participants suggests that a considerable portion of learners feel confident in their ability to understand the meanings of new words. However, it is common for EFL learners to encounter challenges when it comes to understanding new vocabulary. This difficulty can stem from various factors, including limited vocabulary knowledge, lack of contextual information, and difficulties in comprehending complex sentence structures or unfamiliar word forms. The following qualitative data supports the results:

New vocabulary terms can be confusing for me. (B2.1)

I find it challenging to get the definition and usage. (C3.1)

Learning new words can be a challenge for EFL students. However, while 65% of the students disagreed to the challenge, the qualitative data proved otherwise. From the responses, students B2.1 and C3.1 expressed difficulty fully comprehending the meaning and usage of new vocabulary words. Their responses indicate unfamiliar terms are confusing without adequate explanations of definitions and examples of usage in context.

One potential reason for the challenge of understanding new words is the learners' limited vocabulary repertoire. If learners do not possess a solid foundation of previously acquired words, they may struggle to connect the new words with their existing knowledge (Nation & Webb, 2011). Additionally, the lack of contextual information or meaningful examples can hinder learners' ability to grasp the precise

meaning of new words. Comprehending complex sentence structures can also pose a challenge for learners in understanding the meaning of new words. When encountering unfamiliar grammatical structures or encountering words in sentences with complex syntax, learners may find it difficult to deduce the meaning solely from the context (Nation, 2000). To address this challenge, encouraging learners to engage in activities that promote active usage of new words, such as discussions, debates, or writing exercises, can enhance their comprehension and retention of vocabulary (Nation & Webb, 2011). The integration of vocabulary learning with other language skills, such as reading, listening, and speaking, can also reinforce understanding and facilitate meaningful usage of new words.

The second most challenging aspect is forgetting old words when learning new words. The mean score for this challenge was 1.92, which suggests that it is a relatively minor challenge for EFL learners. The majority of participants (77.5%) disagreed with this statement, while 22.5% remained neutral. This is a common issue for language learners, as learning new words can interfere with the recall of previously learned vocabulary. Forgetting old words when learning new ones is a common issue encountered by language learners. As learners acquire new vocabulary, there is a possibility of interference or competition between the newly learned words and the previously acquired ones. This interference can result in difficulties in recalling and retrieving the meaning of older words from memory. One potential factor contributing to forgetting old words is interference from the learners' native language (Nation & Webb, 2011). When learners encounter new words in the target language, their native language may have similar or related words that create interference during the retrieval process. This interference can make it challenging to recall and differentiate the meanings of similar words between languages, leading to the temporary forgetting of previously

learned vocabulary. In a study conducted by de Groot and Keijzer (2000), it was found that interference from the native language significantly affected vocabulary acquisition in EFL learners. The presence of similar words or concepts in the native language can create confusion and hinder the recall of the target language vocabulary. To mitigate the challenge of forgetting old words when learning new ones, various strategies have been suggested. One effective strategy is spaced repetition, which involves reviewing previously learned words at spaced intervals over time (Nation, 2001). By revisiting and practising older vocabulary regularly, learners can reinforce their memory and reduce the likelihood of forgetting. The students mentioned that:

As we learn more vocabulary, I tend to forget some of the words we studied.

(B2.2)

I sometimes forget older words we learned earlier in the year. (A2.1)

I wish we reviewed old words more. (A3.2)

The quantitative results revealed that students tended to forget the words they learn (77.5%). Supporting this, B2.2 and A2.1 expressed that learning new vocabulary causes them to forget previously studied terms. Student A3.2 suggested reviewing old words more often. This aligns with the quantitative finding that 77.5% of students struggle with forgetting vocabulary when learning new words.

Challenges related to using L1 to acquire new vocabulary, such as “translating new words to L1 is difficult” and “comparing new vocabularies to the first language,” had low mean scores (1.82 and 4.43, respectively). The majority of participants (75%) disagreed with “translating new words to L1 is difficult”, while 25% remained neutral. Also, all participants (100%) agreed with “comparing new vocabularies to the first language”. This may suggest that learners do not find translating or comparing to their L1 to be effective strategies for acquiring new vocabulary. One of the most significant

challenges is translating new words to their first language, with a mean score of 1.82, indicating that learners find it difficult to translate new words from the target language to their native language. This challenge could stem from the differences in language structures and vocabulary between the two languages. Moreover, it might reflect the learners' lack of proficiency in their native language, making it challenging to find suitable translations for new words (Nation, 2008). Research has shown that translating new words can lead to inaccuracies, as learners tend to rely on word-to-word translation rather than understanding the meaning of the word in context (Laufer, 2003). Furthermore, translating can hinder learners' ability to develop fluency in the target language as they focus on word-for-word translation instead of developing an understanding of the language's idiomatic expressions (Jiang & Grabe, 2007). Comparing new vocabulary to their first language is also challenging, with a mean score of 4.43. This challenge could stem from the differences between the target language and the learners' native language. As vocabulary usage and word meanings might differ between languages, comparing new words to the learners' first language might not be an effective way to learn new vocabulary (Alqahtani, 2015).

The convergence of the qualitative data also gave insightful responses. Two questions were targeted for this theme. The research sought out how students learnt vocabulary. The objective is to understand the preferences of respondents in terms of vocabulary practice techniques and their perceptions of the effectiveness of these techniques. Students gave the following responses:

I write them down and later try to pronounce them (B1. 11

I try to pronounce the words because in English the pronunciation is better than the writing (B2. 8).

I try to memorise them and read them aloud to myself (C1. 7)

Some words I memorise by heart and some words I write down (C1.1).

First of all, I write them down and learn them by heart (B2. 12).

I don't usually write them down because it will be difficult for me to go back and learn them again (B2. 6).

Some responses indicated writing and memorization. Several respondents (B1.11, B2. 8, and B2.12) mentioned a combination of writing down and memorizing new words as part of their vocabulary practice technique. This indicates that many learners find both writing and memorization to be effective components of their vocabulary learning process. Second, there was an emphasis on pronunciation. Some respondents (B2. 8 and C1. 7) highlighted the importance of pronunciation in their vocabulary practice techniques. They mentioned trying to pronounce new words or reading them aloud as part of their learning process (Stoffelsma et al., 2020). This suggests that for some learners, focusing on pronunciation is a key aspect of their vocabulary learning experience. Finally, the researcher noted individual differences in learning preferences (Bao, 2019). The responses illustrate that different learners have unique preferences when it comes to practising vocabulary. While some respondents prefer writing down new words (B1. 11, B2. 8, and B2. 12) others avoid it, finding it challenging to go back and learn them again (B2. 6). This highlights the importance of recognizing individual differences in learning preferences and adapting vocabulary practice techniques accordingly. The analysis of the interview responses revealed that learners employ a variety of techniques when practising vocabulary, including writing down new words, memorizing them, and focusing on pronunciation. The findings also demonstrate individual differences in learning preferences, emphasizing the need for educators and language learners to consider multiple approaches to vocabulary practice to cater to different learning styles and preferences.

Another challenging aspect of vocabulary acquisition for learners is finding it difficult to do vocabulary tasks. This challenge had the lowest mean score (1.83), indicating that it is the most challenging for EFL learners. The majority of participants (77.5%) disagreed with this challenge, while 22.5% remained neutral. This suggests that learners face difficulties when engaging in specific activities designed to facilitate vocabulary acquisition (Goundar, 2015). The disagreement among participants indicates that they do not perceive vocabulary tasks as overwhelmingly challenging. However, it is important to acknowledge that some learners may still encounter difficulties or struggle with certain aspects of vocabulary tasks. The reasons for finding vocabulary tasks difficult can vary among individuals and may include factors such as lack of interest or motivation, unfamiliarity with the task format, or insufficient preparation or practice. One possible explanation for the perceived difficulty in performing vocabulary tasks is the limited exposure to English in learners' daily lives. If learners do not have regular opportunities to engage with the language outside of the classroom, they may find it challenging to build a strong vocabulary foundation. Additionally, the process of memorizing new words can be demanding, and some learners may struggle with the memorization aspect of vocabulary tasks. A study conducted by Lin (2019) supports the notion that EFL learners may face difficulties with vocabulary tasks due to insufficient exposure to English and the challenges associated with memorization. The findings highlight the need for additional support and strategies to address these difficulties, such as providing more exposure to English through authentic materials and integrating vocabulary learning into meaningful contexts. To address the challenges related to vocabulary tasks, teachers can employ various pedagogical approaches. For instance, incorporating interactive and engaging activities, such as, and multimedia resources, can

make vocabulary tasks more enjoyable and motivating for learners. Some responses to this statement were that:

Translating the English words into my native language can be difficult for me.
(C2.4)

The translations are not always clear. (A3.2)

As can be seen from the responses, the vocabulary tasks were mostly translation. In that regard, C2.4 and A3.2 noted challenges translating newly learned vocabulary into their first language. They explained difficulty finding equivalent terms in their L1. This reinforces the quantitative result that 77.5% of learners disagreed translating words is problematic.

In addition, the research examined how the L3 (English Language) learning strategies were important in the vocabulary learning process. The following analysis focuses on the interview responses concerning the question, “How important do you think of L3 vocabulary learning strategies in the learning process?” The objective is to understand the perceptions of respondents regarding the significance of vocabulary learning strategies when learning a third language (L3). The responses are presented as follows:

I think it is very important because, without vocabulary, we can't speak the language (B1. 13).

They are important because it helps us to learn more (B2. 4).

I think it's very important and the way the teachers teach is also good (C1. 5).

It helps me to improve fast (B1. 6).

The responses show the importance of vocabulary learning strategies for comprehension and expression. Several respondents (C1.8, B2. 2, and B1. 13) highlighted the importance of vocabulary learning strategies in helping them understand

the meaning of words, pronounce them correctly, and express themselves. This suggests that learners perceive these strategies as crucial for enhancing their comprehension and communication abilities in the L3 (Alqahtani, 2015; Nation, 2001). There was also a conflict of strategies: Teacher-guided strategies and personal strategies. Some respondents (B2. 2 and C1. 5) mentioned the value of teacher-guided vocabulary learning strategies in comparison to their personal strategies. They found it easier and more effective to learn new words when taught by teachers, indicating that learners appreciate the guidance and expertise provided by educators in the vocabulary learning process. A few respondents (B1.13 and B2. 4) emphasized the importance of vocabulary learning strategies as a fundamental aspect of language acquisition. They stated that without vocabulary, it would be impossible to speak the language, highlighting the critical role vocabulary learning strategies play in facilitating L3 learning (Nation & Webb, 2011).

4.2.3 Summary

The analysis of the data reveals that EFL learners face several challenges in their vocabulary acquisition journey. These challenges include difficulty performing vocabulary tasks, understanding the meaning of new words, dealing with unclear sounds, forgetting previously learned words when encountering new ones, and struggling to hear new words when the teacher speaks quickly. These challenges reflect the complex nature of vocabulary acquisition and the multifaceted factors that can impede learners' progress. These challenges can be addressed through various strategies, such as providing context, using visual aids, and using slower speech. Also, the data indicate that EFL learners face a range of challenges in acquiring new vocabulary, with some challenges being more prevalent than others. This highlights the importance of providing learners with effective vocabulary instruction that takes into account their individual needs and learning styles (Alqahtani, 2015). Educators and language learners must work together to overcome

these challenges and improve vocabulary acquisition skills. These findings are consistent with existing literature, which suggests that vocabulary acquisition is one of the most significant challenges for EFL learners. Learners often struggle with the sheer number of new words they need to learn, as well as with the complexity of English vocabulary, which is influenced by historical, cultural, and regional factors (Sutrisna, 2021). Additionally, EFL learners may struggle with the phonetics and pronunciation of English words, which can make it difficult to understand and remember new words.

4.3 Factors accounting for the challenges in vocabulary acquisition skills

This theme relates to research question three. Acquiring a rich vocabulary is an essential component of language learning, and it is crucial for effective communication in any language. However, vocabulary acquisition can be a challenging task for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. EFL learners face various factors that can make it difficult for them to acquire new vocabulary efficiently. This is usually influenced by several factors. Understanding these factors is crucial for EFL teachers and learners to develop appropriate teaching and learning strategies that can enhance vocabulary acquisition.

4.3.1 Classroom factors accounting for the challenges in vocabulary acquisition

In the process of vocabulary acquisition, learners encounter various challenges that can impact their progress and hinder their ability to acquire new words effectively. While individual learner factors play a crucial role, it is equally important to consider the influence of classroom factors on vocabulary acquisition. This subtheme focuses on exploring the classroom-related factors that contribute to the challenges faced by learners in acquiring vocabulary. The classroom environment plays a pivotal role in shaping language learning experiences and outcomes. This subtheme delves into the specific

classroom factors that can account for the challenges learners face in vocabulary acquisition. Table 4.3.1 shows the responses concerning this subtheme.

Table 4.3.1. Descriptive statistics of classroom factors

Factors	Percentage					
	Mean	SD	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Total
Unconduciveness of classroom for learning vocabulary	2.93	1.385	40% (16)	17.5% (7)	42.5% (17)	100
No context-related words to help vocabulary acquisition	2.90	1.374	37.5% (15)	27.5% (11)	35% (14)	100
Not much attention is received from the teacher	1.55	.504	100% (40)	0% (0)	0% (0)	100
Teacher does not bring dictionary to class	2.95	1.260	35% (14)	35% (14)	30% (12)	100
Disliking the pedagogies of teaching vocabulary acquisition	2.68	1.366	52.5% (21)	20% (8)	27.5% (11)	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

The first item is *Unconduciveness of the classroom for learning vocabulary*. This factor had a mean score of 2.93, indicating that students perceive the classroom environment as not being conducive to learning vocabulary. The standard deviation of 1.385 and variance of 1.917 suggest that there is some variability in student perceptions. Examining the distribution of responses, 42.5% of the participants agreed that an uncondusive classroom environment affects their vocabulary learning. These individuals likely believe that certain aspects of the classroom environment hinder their ability to focus, concentrate, and engage with vocabulary materials effectively. On the other hand, 40% of the respondents disagreed, indicating that they do not consider the classroom environment to be a significant factor impacting their vocabulary acquisition. Additionally, 17.5% of the participants remained neutral, implying that they neither agree

nor disagree with the statement. The findings align with the research conducted by Coady and Huckin (1997), who emphasized the importance of a rich and stimulating learning environment in facilitating vocabulary acquisition.

According to their study, learners benefit from opportunities to engage with language in meaningful contexts. They argued that a classroom environment that is noisy, cluttered, or poorly ventilated can serve as a distraction and impede effective vocabulary learning. Therefore, their research supports the notion that a well-designed and well-equipped classroom plays a crucial role in successful vocabulary acquisition. Interestingly, Kuo (2014) found similar results in their research, emphasizing the impact of the learning context on vocabulary acquisition. Their findings suggested that the context in which learning takes place significantly influences the effectiveness of vocabulary learning. This further strengthens the argument that the classroom environment, as a significant component of the learning context, should be carefully considered and optimized to support vocabulary acquisition. The insights from Coady and Huckin (1997) and Kuo (2014) further highlight the importance of providing a rich and stimulating learning environment to facilitate effective vocabulary acquisition. The students commented that:

There are distractions and it's not designed to support language learning. (C3.2)

I find it hard to focus on new vocabulary terms sometimes. (B2.4)

There should be more support for language activities. (C1.7)

From the responses, students C3.2 and B2.4 indicated that the classroom environment contains distractions and lacks optimization for vocabulary acquisition. Student C1.7 suggested implementing more supports tailored to language learning activities. These perspectives reinforce the quantitative data showing 42.5% of students view the classroom as un conducive for vocabulary instruction.

The second statement concerned “No context-related words to help vocabulary acquisition”. This factor had a mean score of 2.90, indicating that students feel that there are not enough context-related words to help them acquire new vocabulary. Participants had mixed opinions on this; 35% of the participants agreed that the lack of context-related words hinders their vocabulary acquisition. These students likely believe that encountering new words in various contexts is crucial for developing a deep understanding of their meanings and usage. They may perceive a deficiency in exposure to diverse language contexts, hindering their ability to fully grasp and retain new vocabulary. On the other hand, 37.5% of the respondents disagreed, indicating that they do not consider the availability of context-related words to be a significant obstacle in their vocabulary learning. Additionally, 27.5% of the participants remained neutral, neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the statement. In the literature, reports from Laufer and Hulstijn (2001) and Schmitt (2010) support the importance of encountering new words in diverse contexts for effective vocabulary acquisition. Laufer and Hulstijn (2001) argue that learners need to see new words in multiple contexts to develop a deeper understanding of their meanings and usages. Similarly, Schmitt emphasizes the role of contextualized learning in facilitating vocabulary acquisition. According to these scholars, providing learners with opportunities to encounter new words in different contexts enhances their ability to comprehend and use them effectively. In all, addressing the availability of context-related words in vocabulary instruction can enhance students’ ability to grasp and utilize new vocabulary effectively. The qualitative data supports the interpretation.

When we learn new vocab words, I wish there were more related words presented that show context. (C1.1)

Seeing new terms along with synonyms and antonyms would provide context. (A1.2)

I like to associate words together. (A2.3)

The responses demonstrate that the students needed more context-related vocabularies that would support their learning. Although 37.5% of the students did not find context important, the responses from C1.1, A1.2 and A2.3 deviates from the majority quantitative results. They explained that additional context aids comprehension and retention of new vocabulary. This aligns with the quantitative data indicating 35% of students agreed relevant contextual words are lacking during instruction.

The third item was “Not much attention is received from the teacher”. The mean score of 1.55 indicates that students perceive that they are not receiving much attention from the teacher. The standard deviation of 0.504 suggests that there is not much variability in student perceptions, as all participants (100%) disagreed with this factor. While it is notable that all participants disagreed with the statement, it is still important to consider the insights from Hu and Nation (2000) and Brown (2007) regarding effective vocabulary teaching. Hu and Nation argue that an effective vocabulary teacher should provide individualized feedback to learners and be aware of their individual strengths and weaknesses. They emphasize the significance of personalized attention and tailored instruction to support vocabulary acquisition. Similarly, Brown highlights the importance of teachers being attentive to the needs and progress of individual learners in vocabulary instruction. Although the findings in this particular study indicate that students do not perceive themselves as lacking attention from the teacher, it is still essential for teachers to strive for individualized support and personalized feedback in vocabulary instruction. Recognizing learners’ individual differences and providing tailored guidance can contribute to more effective vocabulary learning outcomes. It is still crucial for teachers to consider the individual needs of learners and provide personalized support in vocabulary instruction. Creating a supportive and attentive

learning environment can enhance students' vocabulary acquisition and overall language development. Some qualitative responses are presented below.

I get much individual attention from the teacher during vocabulary lessons.

(B1.5)

The teacher spends time on me. (B2.4)

I want to get more help from the teacher during vocabulary instruction. (C3.5)

Students B1.5 and B2.4 indicated receiving individualized attention from the teacher during vocabulary lessons. However, student C3.5 expressed wanting more teacher guidance during vocabulary instruction. This reinforces the quantitative finding that most students feel they get sufficient attention from the teacher.

The analysis of the fourth item in the study explores students' perceptions regarding whether the teacher brings a dictionary to class. The mean score of 2.95 indicates that some students feel that the teacher does not bring a dictionary to class. The standard deviation of 1.260 suggests variability in student perceptions, indicating differences in individual experiences and opinions. 30% of the participants agreed that the teacher does not bringing a dictionary to class is a problem. These students likely believe that having a dictionary readily available in the classroom can facilitate vocabulary learning and provide a resource for clarifying word meanings and usage. They may feel that the absence of a dictionary limits their ability to independently explore and expand their vocabulary. On the other hand, 35% of the respondents disagreed, indicating that they do not consider the teacher bringing a dictionary to be a significant issue. Additionally, 35% of the participants remained neutral, neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the statement. Nation (2001) and Schmitt and Schmitt (2014) support the importance of teachers being familiar with dictionaries and utilizing them effectively in vocabulary instruction. Nation emphasizes that an effective vocabulary

teacher should be knowledgeable about various types of dictionaries and should be able to guide learners in their use to enhance vocabulary development. Similarly, Schmitt and Schmitt also highlight the value of using dictionaries to support vocabulary acquisition. Incorporating dictionaries as a valuable resource can enhance students' ability to clarify word meanings and expand their vocabulary. The mixed findings can be interpreted to be negative based on the qualitative data below.

I wish a classroom set of dictionaries was provided to help us. (B1.6)

I don't have the support I need to fully grasp new words' meanings. (B1.5)

We need dictionaries in the classroom. (C2.6)

As the extracts show, B1.6, B1.5 and C2.6 needed dictionaries to be available during class to aid vocabulary learning. They explained that not having this resource prevents them from easily looking up unfamiliar words introduced in lessons. This aligns with the quantitative data showing 30% agreement that teachers do not provide dictionaries.

The analysis of the final item in the study explores students' perceptions regarding their dislike of the pedagogies used to teach vocabulary acquisition. The mean score of 2.68 indicates that some Students express dissatisfaction with the teaching methods employed in vocabulary instruction. The standard deviation of 1.366 suggests variability in student perceptions, reflecting differences in individual experiences and opinions. Examining the distribution of responses, 52.5% of the participants disagreed that they dislike the teaching methods for vocabulary acquisition. These students likely find the pedagogies employed in vocabulary instruction to be effective, engaging, and enjoyable. They may perceive the teaching methods as contributing to their motivation and active participation in vocabulary learning tasks. On the other hand, 27.5% of the respondents agreed that they dislike the teaching methods, indicating that they find the pedagogies uninteresting, ineffective, or lacking in engagement. Additionally, 20% of

the participants remained neutral, neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the statement. From the results, Gu and Johnson (1996) advocated that learners need to be engaged and motivated by the teaching methods used in vocabulary instruction. The research confirms that if learners do not find the teaching methods enjoyable or interesting, they may be less likely to engage in effective vocabulary acquisition (Nation, 2013). Gu and Johnson (1996) argue that effective teaching methods should foster learner engagement and motivation, enhancing vocabulary acquisition. Similarly, Nation (2013) emphasizes the importance of enjoyable and interesting teaching methods in promoting active and effective vocabulary learning. Ensuring that teaching methods are enjoyable, interesting, and effective can enhance students' engagement and motivation in vocabulary learning, leading to improved outcomes. Some of the students commented on alternative views that could facilitate the process:

It is important in the way that it helps me to memorise the words and also to understand their meaning. And it helps me to pronounce the words and express myself (C1. 8).

For me, it is very helpful. It is much easier when I am taught the words than using my personal strategies (B2. 2).

Concerning C1.8, having a dictionary in class is useful for memorizing words. When encountering unfamiliar words, the dictionary can provide definitions, which aids in committing the words to memory. For B2.2, Nation's (2013) assertion of importance of enjoyable and interesting teaching methods is seen. This is because the student highlighted that the teacher's approach is better than their own personal strategies.

4.3.2 Teaching and learning factors

The process of vocabulary acquisition is influenced not only by classroom factors but also by the personal behaviours and interactions between teachers and students. The

dynamics of this teacher-student relationship can significantly impact the challenges faced by learners in acquiring vocabulary. This subtheme explores the personal behaviours of teachers and students that contribute to these challenges and offers insights into addressing them effectively. Understanding the personal behaviours of both teachers and students that account for the challenges in vocabulary acquisition is crucial for improving instructional practices and fostering an optimal learning environment. This subtheme delves into these behaviours, highlighting their significance in the vocabulary learning process. Table 4.3.2 illustrates the responses for this subtheme.

Table 4.3.2. Descriptive statistics of teaching and learning factors (Nation & Newton, 2009)

Factors	Percentage					
	Mean	SD	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Total
Insufficient explanation and usage of words by teacher	3.12	1.343	32.5%	20%	47.5%	100
No effort to learn new words	3.22	1.441	35%	20%	45%	100
Using students' personal experiences in vocabulary instruction	4.45	.504	0%	0%	100%	100
Using repetitions in vocabulary learning	4.41	.498	0%	0%	100%	100
Forming sentences with new words	4.58	.501	0%	0%	100%	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

The first item for this theme looked at *Insufficient explanation and usage of words by the teacher*. This factor had a mean score of 3.12, indicating that students feel the teacher does not explain or use new words frequently enough. The standard deviation of 1.343 and variance of 1.804 suggest that there is some variability in student perceptions. Examining the distribution of responses, 47.5% of the participants agreed that the insufficient explanation and usage of words by the teacher pose a challenge for them.

These students likely feel that the teacher's explanations of new words are not clear, accurate, or contextualized enough, hindering their understanding and retention of vocabulary.

On the other hand, 32.5% of the respondents disagreed, indicating that they do not perceive the teacher's explanations and usage of words to be a significant obstacle in their vocabulary learning. Additionally, 20% of the participants remained neutral, implying that they neither agree nor disagree with the statement. The findings align with the research conducted by Nation and Newton (2009), who emphasized the importance of effective vocabulary teaching strategies. They argued that teachers should provide clear, accurate, and contextualized explanations of new words to enhance students' understanding and retention. Moreover, teachers should help students see the connections between the new words and their existing knowledge and experiences. According to Nation and Newton, a lack of explanation and usage examples by the teacher can impede vocabulary acquisition and limit students' ability to fully grasp and utilize new words. Addressing the issue of insufficient explanation and usage of words by the teacher can enhance students' vocabulary acquisition and overall language development. The focus group discussion revealed that:

The teacher does not always explain the new vocabulary words thoroughly or model how to use them in context. This leaves me confused about the meanings.

(A1.7)

I will like more detailed explanations and examples from the teacher when new vocab terms are introduced. The limited info now makes them hard to understand.

(B2.3)

Getting more explanations of word meanings along with sentences showing usage would really improve my vocabulary learning. (A1.2)

As the responses show, A1.7, B2.3 and A1.2 expressed a desire for teachers to provide more comprehensive explanations and examples when introducing new vocabulary words. Their responses indicate the current instruction does not adequately clarify word meanings and usage. This reinforces the quantitative finding that 47.5% of students agreed teachers' explanations are insufficient.

The second item, *No effort to learn new words*, had a mean score of 3.22, indicating that some students feel they are not putting in enough effort to learn new words. The standard deviation of 1.441 and 45% of the participants agreed that not putting in enough effort to learn new words is a problem. These students likely recognize that their lack of effort, motivation, or engagement hinders their vocabulary acquisition. They may acknowledge the need to be more proactive and take responsibility for their own learning. On the other hand, 35% of the respondents disagreed, indicating that they perceive their effort in learning new words to be sufficient. They likely believe that they are actively engaging with vocabulary learning tasks and dedicating the necessary time and effort to expand their word knowledge. Additionally, 20% of the participants remained neutral, neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the statement. The findings align with the research conducted by Schmitt and Schmitt (2014), who emphasized the crucial role of motivation and effort in effective vocabulary learning.

They argued that learners need to be proactive and take ownership of their learning process. This includes setting personal goals, engaging in independent study, and being motivated to expand their vocabulary. According to Schmitt and Schmitt, learners who demonstrate effort and motivation are more likely to succeed in acquiring new words and integrating them into their active vocabulary. The insights from Schmitt and Schmitt (2014) underscore the importance of learner motivation and effort in successful vocabulary acquisition. Encouraging learners to take an active role in their

own learning, setting goals, and engaging in independent study can enhance their vocabulary learning outcomes. The results are supported based on the responses below.

I don't always put in the effort needed to truly learn new vocabulary words introduced in class. I should devote more time to studying them. (C2.4)

Making an effort to practice new words, use flashcards, and review is something I should do more of to improve vocabulary retention. Right now, I don't put in enough work. (C1.6)

I struggle to learn new vocabulary because I'm not putting in sufficient effort. (A2.1)

Students C2.4, C1.6, and A2.1 acknowledged that they do not always put in adequate effort to learn new vocabulary words. Their responses indicate more effort is needed through strategies like repetition, flashcards, and review. This aligns with the quantitative finding that 45% agreed no effort is made to learn new words.

The analysis of the item related to forming sentences with new words reveals that students found this approach to be the least challenging, as indicated by the mean score of 4.58. Notably, all participants (100%) agreed with this approach, highlighting their positive perception of the practice of forming sentences with new vocabulary. This suggests that allowing students to engage in sentence formation activities as a means of practising and using new words in context can be an effective teaching technique for vocabulary acquisition. The unanimous agreement among the participants indicates that they found forming sentences with new words to be beneficial in their vocabulary learning process. By actively using new vocabulary in context through sentence formation, students are allowed to apply their understanding of word meanings and usage, thereby strengthening their grasp of the words and enhancing their overall vocabulary acquisition. This finding aligns with the insights provided by Brown (2007),

who emphasizes the importance of integrating vocabulary learning with language use. Brown argues that simply memorizing word meanings without connecting them to meaningful contexts and language use is not as effective for long-term retention and language proficiency development. Engaging in activities that require students to form sentences with new vocabulary promotes meaningful engagement with the words and facilitates a deeper understanding of their meanings, collocations, and appropriate usage. Therefore, the unanimous agreement among participants and the support from Brown (2007) suggest that actively using new vocabulary in context through sentence formation can be a highly effective strategy for vocabulary acquisition. Some of the students indicated that:

Using new vocabulary to make original sentences supports my understanding of word meanings and usage. (C2.3)

Writing my own sentences with new words introduced in class improves them and allows me to actively apply the terms. (B1.6)

Students C2.3 and B1.6 indicated that forming original sentences with new vocabulary words improves their understanding and application of the terms. Actively using the words in new contexts reinforces the vocabulary for the students. This aligns with the quantitative data showing 100% agreement that forming sentences aids vocabulary learning.

Similarly, the mean score for using personal experiences in vocabulary instruction was 4.45. Importantly, all participants (100%) agreed with this approach, indicating their positive perception of incorporating personal experiences in vocabulary learning. This suggests that teachers who integrate students' personal experiences into vocabulary instruction may facilitate more effective learning outcomes. The total agreement among participants suggests that incorporating personal experiences in

vocabulary instruction can create a more engaging and relevant learning experience. By connecting new vocabulary with students' own experiences, interests, and prior knowledge, teachers can make the learning process more meaningful and relatable to the students' lives (Cahyono & Widiati, 2008). This approach helps to establish a stronger connection between the new words and the students' existing mental frameworks, which can enhance retention and understanding. The use of personal experiences in vocabulary instruction aligns with the insights provided by Nation (2001), who emphasizes the importance of using meaningful contexts and personalization in vocabulary learning. Nation argues that presenting new words in contexts that are personally relevant to the students enhances their ability to make connections and create mental associations, leading to more robust vocabulary acquisition. By tapping into students' personal experiences, teachers can make vocabulary instruction more relatable, engaging, and memorable. Incorporating personal experiences into vocabulary instruction also promotes student ownership and active involvement in the learning process. When students are encouraged to draw upon their own experiences and share them in the context of vocabulary learning, they become active participants in constructing meaning and applying new words in authentic contexts. This approach fosters a sense of autonomy, motivation, and self-efficacy, which can further enhance vocabulary acquisition. The finding is supported by the responses that:

Incorporating personal examples and experiences into vocabulary lessons helps me connect with and understand the new words much better. (B2.2)

When the teacher relates new vocabulary to things I'm familiar with from my own life, it sticks with me and enhances learning. (C1.4)

It has been very beneficial for boosting my vocabulary. (A1.2)

The students (A1.2, B2.2, and C1.4) all expressed that relating new vocabulary words to their personal experiences is highly beneficial for learning. Grounding the words in familiar contexts aids comprehension and retention of the terms. This supports the quantitative finding that 100% of students agreed using students' personal experiences in vocabulary instruction is helpful.

Lastly, the mean score for using repetitions in vocabulary learning was 4.41. Importantly, all participants (100%) agreed with the use of repetitions in vocabulary learning, suggesting a positive perception of this strategy. This finding aligns with existing research, which highlights the effectiveness of repetition as a technique for vocabulary acquisition (Schmitt & Schmitt, 2014). The aggregate response of the agreement indicates that they recognize the value of repetition in consolidating vocabulary knowledge. By repeating and reviewing words, students have the opportunity to reinforce their understanding, enhance retention, and increase their familiarity with the words. Repetition can aid in the consolidation of vocabulary in long-term memory, allowing students to access and retrieve the words more readily in future language use (Cahyono & Widiati, 2008). However, it is important to note that the effectiveness of repetition in vocabulary learning is contingent upon meaningful context and variation. Merely repeating words without providing a meaningful context or introducing variation can limit the effectiveness of this strategy (Sökmen, 1997). For repetition to be beneficial, it is crucial to provide students with opportunities to encounter the words in different contexts, use them in meaningful and authentic tasks, and engage in active recall and retrieval practice. The use of repetitions in vocabulary learning can be further enhanced by incorporating techniques such as spaced repetition, which involves reviewing words at increasing intervals over time, and interleaved practice, which involves interleaving

the practice of different words or concepts to promote deeper learning and long-term retention. Some responses from the interview are:

I prefer to watch movies or cartoons. That one, they use subtitles so when they write and I pause and learn (C1. 3).

I prefer the learning strategies because the teachers advise us since they know a better way to learn vocabulary (B1.10).

One respondent (C1. 3) mentioned preferring to watch movies or cartoons with subtitles as a way to learn new vocabulary. This indicates that some learners may find it beneficial to acquire new words through contextual and multimedia exposure, which can provide a more engaging and immersive learning experience. For instance, Karakas and Sariçoban (2012) note that watching subtitled cartoons influences incidental vocabulary learning. A similar report was confirmed by Gorjian (2014).

The responses from the interview data also support the quantitative analysis and incorporate further insights for exploration. The following analysis focuses on the interview responses concerning the question, “In your vocabulary learning processes, do you prefer to use learning strategies to learn new words or just memorize new ways without any learning strategies?” The objective is to understand the preferences of respondents in terms of learning strategies and their perceptions of the effectiveness of these strategies for vocabulary learning. The direction of the responses showed that students prefer using learning strategies, value teacher guidance, and adopt multimedia and contexts:

I prefer to use learning strategies in case I have some words that I don't know. I prefer the learning started because it helps me understand better and gives me more meaning of the word in each context (B2.1).

I prefer the learning strategies because I have to find the words on my own which helps me (B2.7).

I prefer the learning strategies because the teachers' guidance is much easier than memorization (C1.6).

I need the strategies from the teachers (B1.5).

A majority of respondents (B2.1, B1.10, B2.7, C1. 6, and B1.5) mentioned a preference for using learning strategies in their vocabulary learning process. Reasons for this preference include better understanding, ease of learning with guidance from teachers, and the ability to find the words on their own. Several respondents (B1.10, C1. 6, and B1.5) specifically highlighted the role of teachers in guiding their vocabulary learning strategies. This suggests that learners value the advice and support of their teachers in developing effective strategies for learning new words. The analysis of the interview responses revealed that most respondents prefer using learning strategies for vocabulary acquisition, valuing the guidance provided by teachers and the opportunity to learn through context. Additionally, some learners find multimedia resources, such as movies and cartoons with subtitles, to be effective in their vocabulary learning process.

4.3.3 Summary

The data analysis and discussion of Research Objective 3 indicate that incorporating certain techniques can enhance vocabulary acquisition among EFL learners. Specifically, the techniques of sentence formation, personalization, and repetition were found to be less challenging and received positive responses from all participants. These findings have important implications for both teachers and language learners. For teachers, the results suggest that incorporating activities that encourage students to form sentences using new vocabulary can be an effective teaching technique. Allowing students to practice using new words in context through sentence formation

helps them develop a deeper understanding of word meaning and usage. This aligns with the research by Brown (2007) that emphasizes the integration of vocabulary learning with language use. Furthermore, the findings highlight the importance of personalization in vocabulary instruction. By incorporating students' personal experiences into vocabulary learning, teachers can create a more engaging and relevant learning experience. This approach helps students connect new vocabulary with their own lives, making the learning process more meaningful and memorable. Nation (2001) emphasizes the significance of using meaningful contexts and personalization in vocabulary learning, as it enhances students' ability to relate new words to their existing knowledge and experiences. Additionally, the results indicate that repetition is a valuable strategy for vocabulary acquisition. By providing repeated exposure to new words, learners have more opportunities to reinforce their understanding and retention of vocabulary items. However, it is important to note that repetition should be accompanied by meaningful context and variation to avoid monotony and promote deeper learning (Sökmen, 1997). For language learners, these findings provide valuable insights into effective vocabulary learning strategies. Learners can practice using new words in context and strengthen their vocabulary usage skills. Personalization allows learners to connect new vocabulary with their own experiences, making the learning process more meaningful and enjoyable. Actively seeking out opportunities to personalize their vocabulary learning, such as using new words in writing or conversation based on their personal interests and experiences, can further enhance their vocabulary acquisition.

4.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter analysed quantitative and qualitative data from EFL learners. This chapter broadly comprised four sections which were the introduction, EFL learners' strategies for vocabulary acquisition skills, challenges EFL learners encounter

in vocabulary acquisition skills, factors accounting for the challenges in vocabulary acquisition skills. Subthemes were developed from the results and discussed as well. The discussions show that that EFL learners use several approaches such as hybrid strategies (dialogue and mobile apps) and traditional strategies (flashcards and wordlists) which play a crucial role in shaping the vocabulary acquisition process. Also, EFL learners faced some challenges relating to morphosyntactic structures, phonology, and translation issues.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.0 Introduction

The concluding chapter offers a closure of the entire study. Specifically, the chapter begins with a summary of the study, where the findings from the analysis and discussion are presented under each research theme which aligns with the research questions. Here, the researcher supports the findings with the literature that was used in the discussion. This is followed by the role of sociocognitive strategies in enhancing students' vocabulary acquisition in EFL classrooms, pedagogical implications drawn from the study, and suggestions for further research. The chapter ends with a conclusion of the chapter.

5.1 Summary of findings

This section discusses the findings based on the results from each of the research objectives: (a) to examine how the EFL learners acquire vocabulary skills at the Ghana Institute of Languages, (b) to investigate the challenges EFL learners encounter in acquiring vocabulary skills at the Ghana Institute of Languages, and (c) to explore the factors that account for the challenges EFL learners encounter in acquiring vocabulary skills at the Ghana Institute of Languages. Guided by the socio-cognitive theory of language learning and the convergent parallel design, the summary of findings explores the themes related to EFL learners' strategies for vocabulary acquisition skills, the challenges they encounter in this process, and the factors contributing to these challenges. Vocabulary acquisition plays a crucial role in language learning, and understanding the strategies employed by EFL learners, the obstacles they face, and the underlying factors are essential for effective language instruction and support.

5.1.1 EFL learners' strategies for vocabulary acquisition skills

Concerning this theme, the study identified multiple strategies that EFL learners employ to acquire vocabulary effectively. These strategies included the use of mobile apps, memorization, reading, and wordlists. This indicates that learners actively and willingly explore various tools and techniques to expand their vocabulary. The use of diverse strategies suggests that learners are actively experimenting with different approaches that align with their personal preferences and learning styles. Another significant finding is the importance of prior knowledge in facilitating vocabulary acquisition. This underscores the value of leveraging existing knowledge to establish connections and associations with new words. By building upon their existing vocabulary, learners can better understand and contextualize new words.

The incorporation of mobile apps as a resource for vocabulary learning reflects the increasing impact of technology in language education. Mobile apps offer learners convenient and accessible platforms to engage with vocabulary exercises, flashcards, and interactive learning activities. The availability of these apps enables learners to pursue independent study and practice at their own pace and convenience, promoting a sense of self-directed learning. The study emphasized the significance of cognitive and metacognitive strategies in vocabulary acquisition. Employing these strategies helped students generate ideas and develop effective learning techniques. By using cognitive processes and monitoring their own learning, students were able to enhance their vocabulary acquisition skills. The findings are confirmed by some studies such as Irawan et al. (2020), Ajisoko (2020), Muddin (2018), Nichols (2008), Ashraf (2014), and Nielsen (2003). For instance, Irawan et al. (2020) found that students get high scores (73.8%) when using media such as Duolingo. Ajisoko (2020) and Muddin (2018) also found increased vocabulary scores.

5.1.2 Challenges EFL learners encounter in vocabulary acquisition skills

The research on the theme of challenges encountered by EFL learners in vocabulary acquisition skills revealed several key findings. Challenges encountered by EFL learners in acquiring vocabulary skills encompass a range of difficulties, including struggles with vocabulary tasks, comprehending the meaning of unfamiliar words, grappling with unclear pronunciation, experiencing interference between previously learned words and new ones, and facing challenges in processing rapidly spoken words. These obstacles reflect the intricate nature of vocabulary acquisition and the diverse factors that can hinder learners' progress. Mitigating these challenges requires employing various strategies, such as providing contextual clues, utilizing visual aids, and adjusting speech pace.

The findings underscore the presence of a spectrum of challenges encountered by EFL learners in their pursuit of acquiring new vocabulary, with certain obstacles being more prevalent than others. This underscores the significance of delivering effective vocabulary instruction that considers individual learners' needs and preferences. The findings align with existing literature, which underscores that vocabulary acquisition represents a primary hurdle for EFL learners. The sheer volume of new words to learn, coupled with the intricate nature of English vocabulary shaped by historical, cultural, and regional influences, contribute to the difficulties encountered. Furthermore, EFL learners may encounter obstacles in mastering the phonetics and pronunciation of English words, further impeding their comprehension and retention of new vocabulary.

In all, the influence of learners' first language can pose challenges in vocabulary acquisition. The differences between the structures, grammar, and lexical items of the learners' first language and the target language can create confusion and interfere with the acquisition of new vocabulary. To complement this, limited exposure to the target

language poses a significant challenge for EFL learners. Without sufficient opportunities to engage with the language in authentic contexts, learners may struggle to acquire new vocabulary effectively. Generally, the findings corroborated with the report by Beck et al. (2002), Laufer (2003), Field (2008), and Teng (2019). For example, Teng's (2019) experimental study showed the effects of L1 and L2 lexical structures on vocabulary acquisition. Also, Kaweera (2013) showed how Thai as a first language and English as a second language create interlingual and intralingual challenges to EFL learners in vocabulary acquisition.

5.1.3 Factors accounting for the challenges in vocabulary acquisition skills

The research findings reveal several factors that contribute to the challenges encountered by EFL learners in acquiring vocabulary skills. These factors encompass both internal and external elements that impact learners' ability to effectively acquire and retain new words. The study revealed that the techniques of sentence formation, personalization, and repetition were well-received and less challenging for participants. These findings carry significant implications for teachers and language learners. This aligns with Brown's research (2007), emphasizing the integration of vocabulary learning with language use. Additionally, personalization in vocabulary instruction emerged as crucial. By incorporating students' personal experiences, teachers can create a more engaging and relevant learning environment, allowing students to connect new vocabulary with their own lives and enhancing the memorability of the learning process. Nation (2001) emphasizes the value of meaningful contexts and personalization in vocabulary learning, as they enable students to relate new words to their existing knowledge and experiences.

Moreover, the study found repetition to be a valuable strategy for vocabulary acquisition. However, it is essential to accompany repetition with meaningful context

and variation to avoid monotony and promote deeper learning (Sökmen, 1997). These findings offer valuable insights for language learners, empowering them to practice using new words in context and strengthen their vocabulary usage skills. Incorporating personalization allows learners to establish connections between new vocabulary and their own experiences, making the learning process more meaningful and enjoyable. Actively seeking opportunities to personalize vocabulary learning, such as incorporating new words in writing or conversation based on personal interests and experiences, further enhances vocabulary acquisition.

5.2 The role of sociocognitive strategies in enhancing students' vocabulary acquisition in the EFL classroom

This study used sociocognitive strategies as a theoretical lens to investigate the vocabulary acquisition skills of EFL learners. From the reported findings, it is imminent that sociocognitive strategies play a significant role in enhancing students' vocabulary acquisition in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom (Atkinson, 2011). These strategies emphasize the interaction between social and cognitive factors in the learning process. By engaging in social interactions, students can actively construct and negotiate meaning, leading to a deeper understanding and retention of vocabulary. One key sociocognitive strategy is the use of authentic materials and real-life situations. By exposing students to authentic texts, such as flashcards, magazines, or online resources, they are exposed to the vocabulary used in real-world contexts. Authentic materials allow students to see vocabulary in meaningful and relevant contexts, making the learning process more engaging and applicable to their daily lives (Raofi et al., 2013).

Furthermore, the strategies help students to engage in discussions with their peers to promote vocabulary development (Wang, 2014). Through dialogue, students can share their knowledge, clarify meanings, and reinforce new vocabulary words. By explaining

concepts to others or seeking clarification, students deepen their understanding of words and their usage. In addition, socio-cognitive strategies can involve interactive games and activities that make learning vocabulary enjoyable. For example, students can engage in word puzzles, vocabulary bingo, or word association games. Such activities create a social and engaging learning environment that enhances vocabulary retention and retrieval (Chen & Luria, 2022). Socio-cognitive strategies often emphasize learning vocabulary in meaningful contexts. When students encounter words in relevant and real-life situations, they can better understand and remember them (Kecskes, 2010). In summary, sociocognitive strategies, such as collaborative learning, authentic materials, teacher-led scaffolding, and technology integration, contribute to students' vocabulary acquisition in the EFL classroom. By creating a socially interactive and meaningful learning environment, students are more likely to develop a broader vocabulary repertoire and become more proficient in using and understanding English words and phrases.

5.3 Pedagogical implications

From the general discussion of the findings and the possible literature that was used to support them, the researcher provides critical pedagogical implications for the research. The researcher provides three pedagogical implications for the research on EFL learners' vocabulary acquisition. First, there should be a provision of context, technological resources, and visual aids in the teaching and learning of vocabulary acquisition skills, regardless of the age of the learners (Chen & Luria, 2022; Kecskes, 2010). Teachers should provide contextualized vocabulary learning experiences by using visual aids, real-life examples, and authentic texts. This helps learners make connections between new words and their contexts, enhancing comprehension and retention. Also, teachers should enhance the use of technology, such as mobile apps and online resources,

as vocabulary-learning tools. These resources provide learners with convenient and interactive platforms for independent study and practice, promoting self-directed learning and engagement with vocabulary exercises.

Second, teachers should foster learner autonomy which can be achieved through the use of technological resources (Nation, 2001; Saeed, 2021). Educators and teachers should encourage learners to take ownership of their vocabulary acquisition by setting personal goals, self-monitoring their progress, and seeking out opportunities to personalize their learning. This helps develop learner autonomy and self-regulation, leading to more effective vocabulary acquisition. Teachers should design activities that expose learners to new words multiple times, but in different contexts and formats, to reinforce understanding and retention. Third, curriculum developers and planners should draft curricula that cater for the diverse learning needs of EFL learners (Figueras, 2012; Nguyen, 2013). Through such an approach, teachers or other implementers could differentiate instruction to meet individual needs, providing varied vocabulary-learning activities and strategies that cater to different preferences and abilities. There should be a provision to incorporate cultural elements into vocabulary instruction to enhance learners' cultural awareness and understanding. This calls for the need to integrate authentic materials, cultural references, and discussions that relate vocabulary to learners' cultural backgrounds and experiences.

5.4 Suggestions for future studies

Based on the findings from this research, the researcher proposes some suggestions for further studies. In the first place, a comparative study on sociocognitive strategies can be conducted. That is, further research could compare and contrast the effectiveness of different sociocognitive strategies, such as flashcards, teacher-led scaffolding, and technology integration. This would help identify which strategies have

the most significant impact on vocabulary acquisition and inform instructional practices. Also, the researcher found indirect influences from L1 and other cultural factors. Hence, an exploration of the role of cultural factors in vocabulary acquisition would be important. That is, future research could investigate how learners' cultural backgrounds and experiences shape their approach to vocabulary learning and how cultural contexts can be integrated to enhance vocabulary acquisition. Similar to this, another research could examine how learners effectively apply the acquired vocabulary in different contexts and language skills, such as speaking, writing, reading, and listening.

Finally, the researcher proposes that future research could investigate the impact of sociocognitive approaches on learners' motivation and engagement in vocabulary acquisition. This could be through assessing how these approaches enhance EFL learners' intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy, and willingness to engage in vocabulary learning activities. More practically, such research could expand the scope to explore the applicability and effectiveness of sociocognitive approaches to vocabulary acquisition in various educational contexts, such as primary schools, secondary schools, other language institutes, or specific learner populations.

5.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study was conducted to explore the vocabulary acquisition process of EFL learners in the Ghana Institute of Languages using the socio-cognitive theory. Through the convergent parallel research design, the study analysed interview and questionnaire data from 40 participants through a census sampling. The researcher found that EFL learners use several approaches such as hybrid strategies (dialogue and mobile apps) and traditional strategies (flashcards and wordlists) which play a crucial role in shaping the vocabulary acquisition process. Also, EFL learners faced some challenges relating to morphosyntactic structures, phonology, and translation issues.

Furthermore, the researcher suggest that these challenges were a result of classroom factors and teacher-students' personal behaviors (lack of effort and insufficient explanations). The researcher highlights the significance of adopting a socio-cognitive approach to enhance L3 vocabulary acquisition among EFL learners. The findings demonstrate that socio-cognitive strategies contribute to the development of English as Foreign Language students' vocabulary acquisition skills.



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