

Vocabulary development is one of the greatest challenges for the English as a second language learner and teacher. Without vocabulary a learner cannot function in the second language. Nation's (2001) form, meaning, and use are descriptive in what is involved in "knowing a word and kinds of vocabulary knowledge and the most effective kinds of learning." The tables 2.1 and 2.3 (Nation, p. 27, 35) give a succinct description of vocabulary development. Form involves spelling and word parts and sound, meaning signals associative responses like synonyms, and use allows for recognition of collocations and grammatical use. Learning vocabulary involves both implicit and explicit learning. Schmitt (2010) suggests that formal study is not the sole provider of the amount of vocabulary learned so vocabulary acquisition occurs in "*explicit learning* through the focused study of words and *incidental learning* through exposure when one's attention is focused on the use of language, rather than the learning itself" (Schmitt, p. 116).

Researchers do not agree on one best way to teach or concentrate on vocabulary. Nation (2001) writes that "opportunities for indirect vocabulary learning should occupy much more time in a course than direct vocabulary learning activities" (Nation, p. 388). In the article, *A comprehensive model of foreign language learning*, Liu revealed that "intentional instruction is significantly better than incidental learning" (Liu, p.148). "Meaningful learning of vocabulary knowledge can accrue from readings but the amount of incidental learning is the amount available from explicit teaching approach." In agreement, Wallace (2007) claims that ELL learners face the need for effective practices in vocabulary development, including breadth and depth of vocabulary knowledge as well as strategies for teaching vocabulary. Wallace (2007) later in his article adds "extensive reading is a necessary component for acquiring a sufficient

vocabulary” but also concedes “explicit instruction can also help develop English language skills, especially with vocabulary (Coady, 1997 as cited in Tran, 2006). Robinson (1989) “argues for a ‘rich’ approach to vocabulary teaching and uses Canal and Swain’s (1980) division of communicative competence...for ensuring that all the dimensions of vocabulary knowledge and skill are covered (Nation, p.34).” Schnitt claims that “for second language learners at least, both explicit and incidental learning are necessary, and should be seen as complementary” (Schnitt, 2000, p. 121). From the research it appears that both incidental and explicit learning needs to take place for the English language learner to succeed at the task of learning enough vocabulary for their purposes.

In a study of what adult ESL learners say about their own improvement of grammar and vocabulary for writing Zhou (2009) inventoried fifteen learners in a multi-year project in a Canadian pre-university program on their goals for improvement in their own writing. The research showed that “learners were particularly concerned about improving vocabulary” (Zhou, p. 40). They wanted to learn more adjectives, descriptive words, and idioms to help their writing. The students also indicated the need to learn more academic and formal words and expressions for subject areas like “arts, economics, landscaping, and engineering and nursing” (Zhou, 2009, p.40). They expressed that their writing was too simplistic and they did not have alternative words such as synonyms for use, in other words, “learners were particularly concerned about general vocabulary, academic vocabulary, and word choice...they needed guidance for improvement” (Zhou, 2009, p. 42).

The effectiveness in learning and retention of vocabulary in reading or writing tasks is a topic of study for researchers. Pichette, de Serres,& Lafontaine (2012) in an attempt to prove the

superiority of writing tasks to reading claim “our study is based upon the hypotheses that the greater cognitive demands of writing should lead to better acquisition of new writing than through reading text” (Pichette, deSerres, & Lafontaine, 2012, p.69). In the article the authors state that of the three aspects of word knowledge (Nation, 2011) of form, meaning, and use only the first two were involved in the reading and writing tasks. The authors also claim that “reading and writing isolated words out of context is not a normal learning task” (Pichette, deSerres, & Lafontaine, 2012, p.66). The authors also cite studies by Hulstijn and Laufer (2001), Laufer (2003), Keating (2008) and Kim (2008) which compared the recall of words after the “reading and writing of sentences, passages or short texts” (Pichette, deSerres, & LaFontaine, 2012, p. 66) with studies done in other research (Barcroft, 2006) and determined the studies with writing tasks showed a higher recall of vocabulary than words in isolation.”

Pichette, deSerres, & LaFontaine (2012) reviewed a study by Webb (2005), in which Webb concluded that readers had time to use memorization strategies while they waited for the writers in the study to finish. In a second experiment, Webb (2005) gave only the time necessary to equalize reading and writing tasks and concluded writing was superior for word retention. Pichette, deSerres, & Lafontaine (2012) in a similar study chose participants with a high mastery of L2 and gave them eight concrete and eight abstract words that were considered rare to avoid previous encounters with the words. The writing task involved writing three sentences per item with the definition of the target word and reading subjects were given three sentences in syntactically different functions. In a recall test the writing task showed higher recall of vocabulary items than reading tasks. To support the superiority of writing tasks the authors report “according to Swain’s (1985) Output Hypotheses, only language production tasks compel

the learner to undertake full grammatical processing” (Pichette, deSerres, & Lafontaine, 2012, p. 68). Pichette, deSerres & Lafontaine (2012) report that “our study is based upon the hypothesis that the greater cognitive demands of writing should lead to better acquisition of new words through writing than through reading text” (Pichette, deSerres, & Lafontaine, 2012, p. 66). The best argument, in my opinion, that they present is their concluding statement that:

Lastly, one further argument may be made in favor of the efficiency of writing over reading; the effect of task overlap while writing necessarily involves a certain amount of reading, the contrary is not true. (Pichette, deSerres, & Lafontaine, 2012)

The productive skills of writing after reading enhance the retention of vocabulary and are a productive form of vocabulary usage.

The key to teaching English language learners to read according to Wallace (2007) is vocabulary development. Learning strategies play a role in the vocabulary development of the ESL learner. Vocabulary notebooks give students access to words they have used and studied already and as Folse (2004) reports “we know that one of the most important factors in learning a word is the number of times that the learner retrieves it” (Folse, 2001, p.103). He also recommends that teaching the student to use a notebook is to “lay out their vocabulary in a way that allows them to have multiple ways of retrieving a word” (Folse, 2001, p.104). McCrostie (2007) claims there have been few studies of the vocabulary notebooks kept by ESL students. In this study McCrostie (2007) examined: the sources from which students choose words, the types and frequency of words selected and the reasoning behind word selection. Problems in word selection show that students need to receive more guidance from instructors. Students’ reliance on textbooks for word selection “is a concern because many textbooks may not be particularly effective at selecting vocabulary” (McCrostie, 2007, p. 251). This study showed

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