Chapter One

Introduction

“I still have the ideas, Walter, but I can’t find the words to clothe them.”

(From Winston Churchill to Walter Monckton, a Minister of Labour and National Service)

1.1 Introduction

This chapter gives an overview of vocabulary learning by discussing its importance in ESL context. The discussion is initiated to put forward the view that vocabulary instruction should take into account the use of strategies on learning various aspects of vocabulary. Then it proceeds to discuss ‘word consciousness and aspects of vocabulary knowledge with some examples. Next, it deals with issues of vocabulary research and the need of vocabulary learning strategies in rural ESL context by highlighting the research problem and research questions. It also highlights the terms used in the investigation, the possible outcome of the study. The chapter concludes with an outline of the study in the form of chapterisation.

1.2 Importance of Vocabulary Learning

“The White Rabbit put on his spectacles. ‘Where shall I begin, please your majesty?’ he asked. “Begin at the beginning,” the king said, very gravely, “and go on till you come to the end: then stop’. - Lewis Carroll in Alice’s Adventure in Wonderland

Writing an introduction to the present thesis on vocabulary learning in the area of ELT seems to correlate with the advice in the above quotation. To begin at the
beginning, it is appropriate to consider the importance of vocabulary in any language and also the importance and role of vocabulary learning in any language learning programme.

Our everyday communicative activities (academic and non-academic) are filled with thousands of words: We say them, hear them, read them and use them in different kinds of communicative activities. Words are our channels and they carry information or message in bits and pieces. Even at the most elementary level of teaching, words are our primary need and concern. Therefore, it is necessary for us to think about what words are and how they mean; how they are associated with other words, and how they operate or function in multiple ways in language and communication. As teachers, we need to understand the importance of words and their associates, their role and function to develop in our learners an awareness of the dynamic nature of words, their meanings and functions.

In the context of the English language, owing to its global spread, new words get added to the dictionaries while old words acquire or assume new or additional meanings. We need to teach and train our learners about this dynamic nature of words so that they become efficient users of the English language and its vocabulary.

Vocabulary is a prerequisite for us to understand and use any language. In other words, it is an important component which requires to be mastered for developing the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. According to Krashen (1989), the reason for devoting or paying much attention to vocabulary is that the learners regularly report lack of vocabulary as a major problem in learning the English
He further argues that language acquirers carry dictionaries with them, not grammar books. As a matter of fact, learning an enormous amount of vocabulary words is a daunting task for a novice learner. When this is the requirement for the native learners, it is very difficult for secondary level ESL learners to acquire the required number of words to use the language efficiently as a means of communication. To support this view, Sokmen (1997) notes that it is impossible for the students to learn the entire vocabulary required for them in the classroom since there are so many words on which teachers cannot spend time within the available class time. Thus, for learners, vocabulary expanding process requires autonomy as well as more responsibility from learners themselves.

Learning a second language involves the manipulation of all the four language skills for effective communication in that language. The crucial factor for achieving these skills is the size of vocabulary one possesses as words are the building blocks of a language and vocabulary is derived as the big part of semantics of any language (Fan, 2003). In this context, the area of vocabulary acquisition is currently receiving much higher attention in the research of English as second language pedagogy. It is still a contentious issue though as to how learners acquire vocabulary better and how it can be taught best in the classroom. There is considerable evidence that extensive reading for meaning leads to vocabulary acquisition over a period of time, while the currently popular communicative teaching approach emphasizes meaningful interactive activities to achieve the same, rather than forms and functions (Nation, 2001). It encourages students’ active participation in meaningful learning activities. Under this approach, it is viewed that vocabulary teaching should be incorporated with regular transaction of the
text, tasks and activities rather than explicitly instructed. However, the process of incidental acquisition is slow and fragile (Nation, 2001). Nation holds that it is difficult to know how words are learned and which words will be remembered. A growing body of research shows that instructional intervention supports the learning process and explicit instruction of vocabulary learning strategies is more effective in enhancing learners’ vocabulary knowledge.

1.3 Introduction to Aspects of Vocabulary Knowledge

Vocabulary is all about words. When we use language we use words all the time. If we know a language well, we know how to say its words and how to write its words. According to English language theorists, competent ESL users are expected to know approximately 50,000 words and should be able to use at least 90% of them. What is even more impressive is that they are expected to be familiar with at least a few aspects about each one of them. For instance, they should know about the spelling and pronunciation to identify, recognize and use a word both in writing and speech, even in cases of great irregularity (e.g., tough, bough, thorough, thought, and ghost). Moreover, they should also be able to make sense of sentences in which words have different meanings in different contexts despite sharing the same form. Let us consider the following example sentences exhibiting a word’s multiple meanings.

1. The hospital wouldn’t admit an invalid (patient) with an invalid (unacceptable) insurance card.

2. Since there won’t be time like the present (now), he thinks it is now time to present (hand over) the present (gift).
In fact, there can be innumerable such intricate instances involved in what we know about word meaning. Let us consider the case of the word ‘lose’. Normally, the word ‘lose’ means ‘to be unable to find something’ and is generally used with a literal reference to things such as vehicle keys or cell phones. But when we encounter usages that do not fit the literal definition, we adapt what we know about the word. Sometimes, we may not even notice this ability to apply our knowledge to the multiple usages of it. The following list provides a variety of meanings associated with the word ‘lose’ when used in different social situations:

- lose a tooth
- lose turn
- lose money
- lose weight
- lose a loved one
- lose a face
- lose a place in line
- lose sleep
- lose in thoughts

‘Lose’ is not an exception in the English language. Confusing word meanings dominate all aspects of English speakers including the print and electronic media conversation, like “How green is the White House?” or “I feel like soup today”.

Word meaning, for instance, is not the only arbitrary feature of the English language that demands our considerable skill with words. Other features included are the uses of word classes (e.g. I can lunch with my family, but I cannot dinner with them.) and word formation (e.g., I am delightful to be here.). Whereas the first sentence below shows the proper use of an affix to change the part of speech, the second one does not.

When my relatives visit, we are hospitable to them.
*When my relatives visit, we hospitalize them. (* indicates this sentence is not grammatically correct and acceptable in standard use).

Hence, the task of word learning is not easy, and it demands great attention. If we think and confirm that learning a word is incremental and that it happens one step at a time, we will approach it realistically as a process rather than a single act of memorization. The various aspects of knowing a word (e.g., meaning, collocation, grammatical features, word parts, and appropriateness) are understood gradually, over time, as a result of seeing a word and using it.

It’s not possible for all of us to anticipate every peculiarity of each word or every gap in a word learner’s knowledge, but we can develop skills and strategies that will make our insights valuable to the word learners. In this sense, a teacher of English language must become a learner along with the students, persistently on the lookout for insights about why we use words as we do. This can happen in a classroom where authentic language is enjoyed, word awareness is encouraged, and “errors” are seen as opportunities to better understand words and their appropriate usage.

To move further, learning words in any language other than one's mother tongue is not a day's task. In other words, words are not instantaneously acquired by the second language or foreign language learners. A number of researchers in second language acquisition are of the opinion that words are gradually learned over a period of time from numerous sources of exposure (Nation, 2001). This suggests that there are different aspects and degrees of knowing a word. Also vocabulary knowledge could be thought of in terms of the receptive and productive knowledge, of which it is assumed
that the receptive knowledge occurs first followed by the productive. One should be aware of the fact that vocabulary knowledge consists of more than just two facets - meaning and word form, of which people talk about mostly while learning new words.

According to Wallace (1982: 27), to know a word in a target language may mean the ability to:

- recognize it in its spoken or written form;
- recall it at will;
- relate it to an appropriate object or concept;
- use it in an appropriate grammatical form;
- in speech, pronounce it in a recognizable way;
- in writing, spell it correctly;
- use it with the words it correctly goes with, i.e. in the correct collocation;
- use it at the appropriate level of formality; and
- be aware of its connotations and associations.

All the aspects of word knowledge mentioned above are related and therefore are essential for anyone to perform well in a wide variety of contexts. However, it is impossible for one to gain immediate mastery of all the aspects of word knowledge when the word is encountered for the first time (Schmitt, 1998). Each aspect of word knowledge may be learned in a gradual manner from numerous contexts. From this perspective, vocabulary acquisition is not spontaneous but incremental in nature (Richards, 2000; Nation, 2001; Read, 2000).
1.4 Word Consciousness

In order to have a good command over a language, we should know how words get operated in a wide variety of contexts. In other words, it is important for us to promote ‘word consciousness’ among language learners. If we have ever wondered why a toothbrush isn’t called a *teethbrush or why silverware can be made of plastic, we have shown some word consciousness—an awareness and appreciation of words and the ability to reflect on their use. Words are fascinating! This idea has become popular in the context of emerging print and electronic media. It may be pointed out that words are less straightforward than we might think. To get this sense, let us look at the following example sentences.

We drive in the parkway and park in the driveway.

We play at recitals but recite at plays.

Quicksand takes you down slowly.

The above examples demonstrate that there are some patterns that facilitate word learning (e.g., teachers teach and actors act) and others that get in the way (e.g., grocers don’t *groce and fingers don’t *fing). Therefore, word consciousness is alertness to words. It is a helpful and often entertaining reminder that language is human, not always consistent, and often confusing.

All in all, a word is microcosm of human consciousness. Its consciousness is valuable in academic pursuits; in fact, it is “essential for comprehending the language of schooling” (Thornby, 2008, p.1). Word learners benefit when classroom discussions and activities regularly feature discussions of register (e.g., would you use the word sibling when you talk to your friend? What other word might you use?), the precision of words...
(e.g., How is fraudulent different from dishonest?), and the differences in word choices in speaking and writing (e.g., you might use the word kids in a conversation. What word would you use in writing?). Research has shown that simple discussions like these are very valuable to word learners. For example, in a seven-year study conducted by Cheryl Boyd Zimmerman (2006), on the development of word consciousness in elementary school children, teachers used regular class discussions and practice exercises to alert learners to word usage. Students also had frequent opportunities to experiment. The positive results included an increase in the learners’ accurate use of words and their motivation to use new words.

In the interest of fluency, we often don’t notice the reasons behind our word choices; we are guided by an unconscious intuition. For example, many proficient speakers of English would correctly recognize that something is wrong with the following sentences, but they may not know where exactly to spot error or where the sentences require correction.

*The boys made their homework.

*The volcano wasn’t working.

*The man is six feet high.

Word consciousness would lead a teacher to wonder why these sentences sound wrong and then to look for an explanation. In fact, the reason lies in the principle of collocation, or the tendency of certain words to occur with certain other words. Most of us never learned this principle consciously, but we know that we do homework, volcanoes erupt, and a man is six feet tall.
Proficient speakers might also be unaware of the many words and phrases with misleading word parts. For example, *rugged* is unrelated to *rug*, just as *stingy* is unrelated to *sting*. The term *over-the-counter drugs* are confusing because it refers to drugs that don’t require prescriptions, whereas the only counter in most drug stores is used for prescription drugs. Also, while *a lot* and *a few* are opposites, *quite a lot* and *quite a few* mean the same thing. Word formation can also be misleading. The opposite of *careless* is *careful* and the opposite of *harmless* is *harmful*, but the pattern does not hold for the opposites of *strapless* and *tireless*. Or consider the skill involved in interpreting the meanings of *crack* as used in the phrases *crack the case*, *crack a whip*, and *crack down on crime*.

The basic premise or the main contesting point here is that word consciousness is a critical skill to develop, first for vocabulary teachers, and then for their students. It will enable learners to improve their use of words by making insightful observations about words in authentic use. A key aspect of word consciousness is acknowledging the extensiveness of what it means to know a word. That is, word consciousness includes a growing understanding of the many layers of word knowledge.

1.4.1 The Layers of Word Knowledge

To know a word means to know a great deal about its form, meaning and use aspects of it. This view is the premise of many current theories and learning materials. The credit of this concept goes to Paul Nation, (Nation, 2001) a widely published and highly respected researcher and practitioner in second-language vocabulary studies. He proposed a breakdown of the types of knowledge involved in knowing a word, including its written and spoken forms, grammatical patterns, collocations, frequency,
appropriateness, and meaning, including concept and associations. The types or features of word knowledge are likened to layers, which are added incrementally, in no particular order. The goal of the learner is to glean information from each encounter with a word, and to gradually add layer after layer of knowledge until a word is understood and can be used with ease. Effective word learners continue to notice more and more about word use, and acquire more layers of word knowledge as they encounter words again and again. The following table comprises some of the layers or aspects of word knowledge as suggested by Zimmerman (2009).

**Table No: 1: Layers of Vocabulary Knowledge**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Layers of word knowledge</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Meaning</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive/negative connotation</td>
<td>The girl is slim/skinny.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree (strength of a word)</td>
<td>Student records are annihilated after five years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Collocations</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fixed phrases</td>
<td>Large sums of people were present.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preposition use</td>
<td>They all discriminated me because of my accent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Grammatical features</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive/active verbs</td>
<td>He cut the vegetables/vegetables are cut by him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb complements</td>
<td>I like to ski because I enjoy to fast.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counts/uncount nouns</td>
<td>No dopes are allowed on this campus. (intended as a reference to drugs) Children play with marbles(toys in the</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 4. Word Parts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Right meaning, wrong suffix</td>
<td>The car was spewing exhaustion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word building gone awry</td>
<td>There is great bondage between my relatives and me.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 5. Register/Appropriate forms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal/informal</td>
<td>What is happening dude? (employee to boss)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polite or people-sensitive/impolite</td>
<td>Physically-challenged/crippled-people can live active lives. Senior citizen/old person, gate keeper or watch man/security guard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct/euphemistic</td>
<td>I heard that our MLA died/passed away.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 1.5 Why Vocabulary Area Research?

Vocabulary learning used to be a neglected component of language learning and teaching. However, from the recent emerging research (Nation, 2001; and Gu, 2003; Zhang & Changyu, 2011; Mizumoto, 2012), an enormously growing interest in this area is evident. Applied linguists, ELT specialists, teachers and publishers are paying a considerable amount of attention to the area of vocabulary learning as a distinct component in language teaching. Language teachers and researchers have been consistent and curious in exploring various approaches to foster vocabulary learning in the language classroom.
Because of the research advances in the linguistic study of the lexicon, psycholinguistic investigations into the mental lexicon (a mental dictionary that comprises information regarding a word's meaning, pronunciation, syntactic characteristics, and so on), and the popularity of the communicative approach since the 1970s, rethinking of the role of vocabulary in language pedagogy has started to revive its importance. Over the past two decades, a considerable and substantial range of research concerning vocabulary acquisition has provided us with valuable insights and suggestions on vocabulary instruction in the language classroom. Early research findings of L1 vocabulary acquisition by Nagy and Herman (1985) lead our perspective to a more implicit and incidental approach of vocabulary acquisition through extensive reading since children are observed to expand their vocabulary knowledge progressively through repeated exposures in various discourse contexts (Coady, 1997). Following this same logic, Krashen (1989) argues that it is impractical to learn an enormous amount of vocabulary in a structured and explicit way due to the time constraints of L2 classroom.

To sum up the need of vocabulary research from pedagogical perspectives (teaching and learning processes), Michael McCarthy’s remarks on it can be considered here. In an interview (Cambridge Connection, 2001, p.1), he explained why he was interested in vocabulary research:

“Semantic competence comprises meaning of any language, and vocabulary is a common problem for many students. So I've always been interested in ways of helping learners in building up a big vocabulary as fast and as efficiently as possible.” - (McCarthy, 2001, p.1),

As for the "secret to vocabulary learning," McCarthy remarked on the same occasion:
“The successful learners are those who develop techniques and disciplines for learning vocabulary: it might just be a question of keeping a notebook, or using a dictionary properly or perhaps disciplining yourself to look over your notes or to read a lot outside of class. The more independent you become as a learner, the better and stronger your vocabulary becomes, I think” (McCarthy, 2001, p.2).

1.6. Importance of Strategies in Language Learning

“The development in the area of second language acquisition research turned its shifted its focus from a teacher-centered perspective to learning and learner-centred acquisition of language.” (Schmitt 1997, p.199). In other words, the belief that individual learners’ endeavors tend to be a governing factor in the language learning process was gradually formed among a number of scholars (Schmitt 1997). Language teachers, therefore, were getting motivated to examine what the individual learner, especially successful learners, do in their study to elicit useful information on the process of language acquisition. Rubin (1975) and Stern (1975) are two of the earliest researchers who shift their focus from teaching methods and materials to a more learner-centred aspect, maintaining that successful language learners employ a variety of learning strategies in their study to facilitate language acquisition. Other surveys (e.g. Bialystok, Frohlich and Naiman et al. 1978) also reveal findings supporting Rubin’s argument (Reiss 1985). By means of questionnaires, interviews, and observation, a more substantial collection of learning strategies is made possible and researchers attempt to construct a rigorous framework to describe them adequately. O’Malley and Chamot (1990, p.1) define “strategies are particular actions or decisions that learners employ to enable them use or apply knowledge and information and classify these
strategies into three major types: metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies, and social/affective strategies.” Building on the research by Chamot, O’Malley, Dansereau, and Rubin, Oxford (1990) has compiled a most comprehensive classification of language learning strategies including six major categories. The direct strategies consist of memory strategies, cognitive strategies, and compensation strategies; the indirect category contains metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies. One point to note about the learning strategies is that they “are not the preserve of highly capable individuals, but could be learned by others who had not discovered them on their own” (O’Malley & Chamot 1990, p.2).

The argument is that learning strategies are teachable and also helpful to break the myth that some learners have an aptitude for languages and thus achieve high language proficiency without too many efforts. This preconceived notion may demotivate underachieved learners so much that they give up learning; and teachers seem not to have a significant part to play in the language classroom. After an inspection to research on second language vocabulary instruction, Oxford and Scarcella (1994) propose a new ‘research-based approach’ to L2 vocabulary instruction. Compared to traditional approaches, in which teachers leave vocabulary learning to students without teaching them how to improve their vocabulary knowledge on their own or strategies for learning, this new research-based approach puts emphasis on vocabulary learning strategies instruction in addition to needs analysis, personalization, and varied activities in vocabulary teaching. Also, Hunt and Beglar (2005) suggest a systematic vocabulary development framework incorporating incidental learning, explicit instruction, and independent strategy development. Provided all these
frameworks are embedded in second language classroom pedagogy, learning outcomes will be more efficient and effective.

The main benefit gained from all learning strategies, including strategies for vocabulary learning, is the fact that they enable learners to take more control of their own learning so that students can take more responsibility for their studies (Nation, 2001). Consequently, the strategies foster “learner autonomy, independence, and self-direction” (Oxford & Nyikos, 1989: 291). Equipped with a range of different vocabulary learning strategies students can decide upon how exactly they would like to deal with unknown words. A good knowledge of the strategies and the ability to apply them in suitable situations might considerably simplify the learning process of new vocabulary for students for instance, independence in selecting which words to study results in better recall of the words than when the words are chosen by someone else. (Ranalli, 2003: 9).

Nation (2001) believes that a large amount of vocabulary could be acquired with the help of vocabulary learning strategies and that the strategies prove useful for students of different language levels. As learning strategies are “readily teachable” (Oxford & Nyikos 1989: 291), the time teachers spend on introducing different ways of vocabulary learning and practicing to students cannot be considered as wasted. Also, Cameron (2001) believes and suggests that the learners should be trained to use the strategies as they may not implement vocabulary learning strategies on their own. A number of linguists have long recognized the importance of learner independence in vocabulary acquisition. The view of Gairns and Redman (1986) is that students should be more responsible for their learning and pay greater attention to individual needs. The
reason is that after elementary level, it is increasingly difficult for teachers to select vocabulary equally useful to all students; thus time spent on teaching may be wasted. Schmitt (2000) argues that it is essential to help learners in acquiring strategies which are necessary to learn words by themselves. Oxford and Scarcella (1994) suggests that ‘systematic vocabulary instruction’ facilitates learner with specific strategies of acquiring words in non academic environment.

Nation (1990; 2001) argues that using strategies will enable the learners acquire vocabulary independently, even if he is devoid of teachers’ association. Besides, using strategy is a part of the vocabulary development program. Schmitt and Schmitt (1995), considers that introducing a variety of learning strategies to learners is the best teaching plan. Consequently, learners are able to decide the preferred ones for their own selves. This enables learners' need for developing their strategy knowledge.

To sum up, use of words is an essential thing while performing any human activity that involves language. In the context of talking about language learning, its vocabulary comes in the first place. In this regard, lexical competence of a learner is regarded as the heart of ‘communicative competence.’ Doesn’t matter how better the learners learn grammar, irrespective of the fact that how L2 sounds are mastered successfully, transaction in English cannot occur in any productive manner without words expressing larger range of meanings (McCarthy, 1900, viii). Learning vocabulary is a continual and lifelong process. It is impossible for teachers to teach students all the words. Ultimately students need to learn words independently. Before that, teachers need to help their students develop greater range of vocabulary learning strategies.
1.7 Teaching English Scenario in Rural Andhra Pradesh

Andhra Pradesh was emerged into a state on the basis of local languages and dialect. Telugu is considered as the official language. Kannada, odiya, Tamil, Hindi, Marathi, Urdu and many other languages are also used in the border areas of the state. By and large, imparting of education in the state is done through rural vernacular language (e.g Telugu) and English language.

English as L2 was made familiar at elementary level as second language and as L3 from class VI to class X at secondary school level. This led to scope for Bilingual education. Despite early introduction of English at school level, learners who are from rural schools lack the required exposure to English language. As argued in Nagendra (2011): “These are disadvantaged due to lack of exposure to Rich English input, motivation and supporting ambience and infrastructure to acquire L2. English classroom was solely responsible for the learners to gain proficiency in English. Some other reasons include: low economic families, illiterate and semi-literate family members absence of basis resources, ill-equipped faculty members, inadequate instruction.

Special initiatives of the Government for imparting English skills to the rural students, the scenario seems to getting better. 6,500 High Schools were established as ‘Success Schools’ by Government and released a government order (G.O). (Venkataramana, 2008) argues that “introduction of English medium as the medium in one section of every class is made an obligatory component in the ‘Success Schools’. This was done with an objective to not only enhance academic quality in English but also develop the English communication abilities of rural students and enable them to
explore plethora of avenues in information Technology and knowledge based industries or market-driven career. But, in less span of time (one year), this new initiative, and curricula exposed more problems to the present teachers in facing the new challenge and it brought about no positive results in terms of TLP (Teaching Learning Process).

Against this backdrop, the government of A.P reintroduced the State curricula (Suresh, 2010). Despite this, still a lot more efforts must be put in to improve the quality education, especially pertaining to L2 teaching and learning among the rural learners. To gain reasonable proficiency in L2, it is prominent for the students to acquire the four language skills (LSRW skills). It warrants that adequate input and guidance and innovative or novel instructional practices in the classroom are essential to develop the target language ability of rural students” (Nagendra, 2011; p:3).

1.8 Rationale for the Present Study

The present study is premised on the following understanding of the researcher. First, vocabulary is elemental to the texts and lessons that comprise learners’ learning experiences. It is obvious that a learner's ability to understand words and their meanings is essential in both language and content areas. As curriculum increases in difficulty, so too do the words that make up that curriculum. At a very basic level, vocabulary underlies a learner's ability to understand what is being taught.

Second, well-developed vocabulary is an essential component for success in reading. As teachers, we recognize that reading becomes a great challenge for students who lack adequate word knowledge. Indeed, research identifies that, "for adequate
reading comprehension from grade three on, children require word recognition skills and an average or above-average vocabulary" (Biemiller, 2005, p. 41). Explicit instruction of vocabulary has been shown to improve reading comprehension for English language learners (Carlo, et al., 2004). Furthermore, vocabulary instruction can develop an in-depth knowledge of specific words and promote an increased appreciation of words and their power (Scott & Nagy, 2004). This interest in words is referred to as "word consciousness" and is likely to benefit students as they develop as readers (Graves, 2006).

Also, based upon Zimmerman’s (1997) survey, we would think that most second language learners have traditionally been taught by methods that paid insufficient attention to vocabulary and thus the statement that most teachers will also continue to neglect vocabulary appears reasonable (Coady, 1997).

More importantly, research on the use of vocabulary strategies has revealed differences among learners in terms of their strategy use. Successful vocabulary learners were found to be active strategy users who were conscious of their learning and took steps to regulate it. On the other hand, poor or low proficient learners tend to display neither awareness for learning new words nor an ability of connecting new words to existing or prior knowledge. All in all, the basic premise for the study is that rural ESL learners are predictably the first to tell the teachers that they need more vocabulary knowledge. A commitment to vocabulary building is what we believe will contribute to students’ reading development (apart from learners prior and cultural knowledge). By building adequate vocabulary knowledge, they will be able to gain access to challenging and advanced reading texts in their future academic career.
This study is based on the following research assumptions:

- “High-frequency words should probably be taught, so they mainly require strategies for review and consolidation, whereas low-frequency words will mostly be met incidentally in reading or listening, and so initially require strategies for determining their meanings, such as guessing from context and using word parts” (Schmitt, 2000, p.133).

- “Learners need to not only know about strategies and understand what they involve, but they need to become very comfortable with their use. Until they reach a satisfactory level of comfort with a strategy, it is unlikely that they will truly experience its effectiveness and find it as easy to use as their default strategies” (Moir & Nation, 2002, p. 15).

Arguably, both proposals suggest that teachers need to help learners to become self-motivated experts in vocabulary learning. Thus, learners need to undergo explicit instruction to become proficient with the range of strategies that can be employed through the learning process.

With regard to rural ESL context, learners at secondary school level are not sufficiently equipped with required vocabulary stock. Also vocabulary learning is one of the major challenges that they face during the process of learning English. There is hardly any training offered to teachers in pre-service or in-service teacher education programs in implementing vocabulary learning strategy instruction. Learning strategies being a relatively contemporary researchable issue is yet another reason for taking up this study. Furthermore, research does demonstrate that vocabulary techniques or
strategies that enable autonomous or self-learning of a language. One way to alleviate the burden is to assist learners in becoming independent learners during the process of L2 vocabulary learning. This could be achieved through instructing learners explicitly to apply vocabulary learning strategies as efficiently as possible. Mainly, it is my interest and motivation to undertake a study on ‘promoting vocabulary learning autonomy through explicit training in VLSs (Vocabulary Learning Strategies) in a rural government high school of Andhra Pradesh state. Hence, the need of the hour is training learners in the use of VLSs and helps them gain desired confidence in learning and using the target language.

1.9 Research Problem

It is observed in Andhra Pradesh that most of the ESL learners of the secondary level (class IX), specifically learners of the rural schools, do not have adequate vocabulary stock or required vocabulary size. As a result, these learners do not have adequate reading ability/proficiency in the target language (L2). It is also inferred that inadequate vocabulary size, knowledge and lack of required strategies would cause a major hindrance to their required linguistic proficiency and would cause in them low confidence level towards the English Language. Their interest in vocabulary learning strategies was first aroused when the researcher engaged them in an academic interaction as a part of his PGDTE project. Many students voiced their views about the difficulty of memorizing and retaining English words and using them in both speaking and writing. They had also realized that their small vocabulary size had hampered their effective English learning abilities. It was also learnt that they had not been made aware
of the appropriate ways to learn and use vocabulary in their academic and communicative needs.

It was noted that despite studying English for about 7 years, they still found it difficult to read and process a simple reading text appropriate to their level. They remained silent and idle when they were supplied with a text to read and later complained that they could not decipher the meaning of many words from the texts given. Their general and previous knowledge was poor in processing English texts. These existing gaps in English proficiency also made them discontinue from mainstream studies and opt for vocational programmes.

The learners could not successfully process any reading text on their own. In this regard, it is cited from Nagendra (2011) that “it was due to various reasons: marks or grade-oriented instruction, ill-equipped notions of teaching, absence of rich English exposure, no proper reading-based activities or habits and primarily due to lack of adequate vocabulary knowledge”.

A careful analysis of how textbooks approach and value the teaching of vocabulary knowledge in English textbooks of Andhra Pradesh reveals that, vocabulary learning has not deserved greater attention. Textbooks, however, do not provide adequate activities for developing and strengthening all aspects of word knowledge. Very little emphasis is laid on the component of vocabulary learning practice. This implies that receiving systematic exposure to all of the different aspects of word knowledge has not been ensured for the learners. Also, an important opportunity for recycling vocabulary through a range of word knowledge-related activities is missing. Hence, this linguistic gap needed to be bridged.
After textbooks, the teacher is probably the next best resource in the classroom for introducing new vocabulary and providing important information on words, their meaning and use. Hence explicit intervention by teachers in vocabulary learning deserves to occupy a substantial part of any teaching and learning programme. Teachers can bank on the extensive research base on vocabulary learning and teaching to inform instruction (Harmon, Wood, & Hedrick, 2008). In this research summary, some key understandings of vocabulary learning and teaching are very much relevant. The following are six key understandings for all teachers across age levels and content areas to take note of:

- Word knowledge is important for learning.
- Word knowledge is complex.
- Metacognition is an important aspect of vocabulary learning.
- Effective vocabulary instruction moves beyond the definitional level of word meanings.
- Vocabulary learning occurs implicitly in classrooms across disciplines.
- Vocabulary learning occurs through direct instruction of strategies.

Explicit training of VLSs at secondary school level is a necessary intervention in the light of prevailing conditions in the rural context of Andhra Pradesh. There by choosing appropriate strategies that help learners build effective ways of vocabulary learning, this study aims at an intervention programme for enabling the learners to achieve the required learning goals in the target language.
1.10 Assumptions and Hypotheses of the Study

The present study is premised on the following assumptions:

1. The rural ESL learners do not have adequate exposure to L2 vocabulary input.
2. The learners tend to memorise the meanings of words in their mother tongue. The teachers of English translate the theme of prescribed texts by simply explaining the vocabulary present in the texts. No attempt is made to enhance vocabulary knowledge. The learners do not know how to learn vocabulary for productive purposes.
3. The learners are not aware of vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs).

1.10.1 Research Hypothesis

The study is based on the following hypothesis.

Explicit instruction of vocabulary learning strategies in classroom would enhance vocabulary learning among learners.

1.11 Research objectives and Research Questions

The present study primarily seeks to explore the feasibility of explicit instruction in vocabulary learning strategies using appropriate vocabulary teaching material and aims at promoting independent vocabulary learning ability in rural English medium learners. Subsequently, learners are exposed to different aspects of vocabulary knowledge through simple authentic reading texts, graded according to the learners’ existing reading proficiency. The study seeks to find answers for the following research questions:
1. What is the learners’ existing level of vocabulary?

2. What are the factors responsible for the learners’ low proficiency in vocabulary?

3. Which vocabulary learning strategies would help the learners enhance independent learning ability?

4. Which aspects of vocabulary knowledge should the learners be made aware of?

5. To what extent will improvement in vocabulary knowledge impact the learners’ performance in English?

1.12 The Working Terminology Used in the Study

Definitions used throughout the present investigation have been given below in this section.

1.12.1 Vocabulary Learning Strategies

Mayree (2007) states that “The ‘vocabulary learning strategies’ refer to “a combination of steps or actions or decisions/techniques and behaviors, which the subjects or the students informed employing for knowing the meaning unfamiliar words, to retain those aspects of vocabulary knowledge, and to further enhance their knowledge of vocabulary” (Intaraprasert 2004, p. 53). In the context of the present study, the words ‘VLSs’ sometimes is used as the short form for vocabulary learning strategies.”

1.12.2 Learners

“Learners” refer to class IX students learning English in the academic year 2014-2015 at Zilla Parishad High School Kanukur of Anantapuramu District in Andhra
Pradesh. The hours per week they have for learning English in the school may vary ranging from four to six hours. They devote their time mainly to learn the contents of the prescribed English textbooks.

1.13 The Usefulness and Outcomes of the Study

Language teachers and learners get many insights from this study due to the fact that he has focused on developing strategies on learning vocabulary, its conceptions, and misconceptions in this study. The study also focuses on the issues those reflect upon thinking patterns and beliefs of strategies of acquiring or learning vocabulary. ESL practitioners utilise the findings of studies for the sake of developing vocabulary for teaching and to change their student’s misconceptions on learning vocabulary. Language Learners, in order to improve their repertoire of vocabulary, consider various strategies on learning vocabulary are adapted to enhance communicative competence.

Learning vocabulary is a long-term task. It is, therefore, suggested that learners have to take control of this learning task and be autonomous (Nation, 2001). It is also well known that vocabulary is not learned in a linear manner; rather, it is learned incrementally through multiple exposures. The requirement for multiple exposures fits in well with this strategy-based instruction in vocabulary learning. In order to promote ongoing vocabulary development, the learners must be made aware of various vocabulary learning strategies. Thus, the study attempts to establish a word-conscious environment in the classroom and contribute to learners’ willingness to embrace new words. Thus, the study helps learners achieve autonomy in learning of vocabulary.
1.14 Chapterisation

The researcher has divided the thesis into five chapters as follows:
Chapter One: Introduction
Chapter Two: Review of Literature and Theoretical Framework
Chapter Three: Research Methodology and Design
Chapter Four: Analysis and Interpretation of the Data
Chapter Five: Conclusion: Findings and Implications
This is followed by list of references and appendices.

1.15 Overview of the Chapter

This introductory chapter made an attempt to offer an overview of the various issues involved in vocabulary learning in rural ESL context. It highlighted the importance of vocabulary learning and need for strategy training in rural ESL context. Then it presented the background of the study, rationale of the study, research problem and research questions along with research hypothesis. The concepts and the working definitions used in the study were explained. The next chapter will review the relevant literature available in the discipline including theoretical constructs.