Abstract

Learning vocabulary is an essential part of language learning process. However, it is generally observed that second language learners in rural areas resort to two ways when they encounter new or unfamiliar words in English language. They either avoid/skip the words or ask teachers for the meanings, preferably for the mother tongue equivalents of new words. Consequently, this aspect of vocabulary learning is not a joyful and enriching activity for the learners. The researcher, as a rural ESL learner had also experienced the same. In this context, Nation (2001) has suggested that learners should take control of this learning task and be autonomous.

The present study was conducted as a response to the need for creating awareness about vocabulary learning strategies among rural ESL learners. The study proposed to integrate vocabulary learning strategies with classroom instruction so that learners not only learn and use the new words but also learn and become aware of the strategies to apply them independently in their immediate academic context. With this premise, the study argues in favour of explicit instruction of vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs) to promote independent vocabulary learning among rural ESL learners.

In ELT literature, there are a spectrum of vocabulary learning strategies proposed by various linguists and researchers (Stoffer, 1995; Nation, 2001; and Gu, 2003, Zhang & Changyu, 2011). Vocabulary Learning Strategies are different techniques or steps taken by language learners to make learning words easier and faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed and more effective (Oxford, 2003, Nation, 2001).
They constitute knowledge that enables learners to find out the meaning of new words and their use (gathering information about words, retaining them in long-term memory (storing), recalling them when needed in comprehension (retrieving), and using them in language production (Ruutmets, 2005).

Among different vocabulary learning strategies proposed by different researchers, Schmitt (1997) has classified VLSs into two main groups of strategies. They are: 1. **“Discovery Strategies”**: to discover and gain initial information about words, and 2. **“Consolidation Strategies”**: to make some efforts to remember, retain the words to use them across language skills. Further, Schmitt has categorized the vocabulary learning strategies into five sub-categories. They include: “**Determination Strategies**, “**Social Strategies**, “**Memory Strategies**, “**Cognitive Strategies** and **Metacognitive Strategies**" (, Xinjie, 2011; Schmitt, 1997). The present study proposed to incorporate five specific vocabulary learning strategies derived from the aforementioned strategies by Schmitt (1997). The researcher has also adopted the model of **“motivated vocabulary learning developed”** by Tseng and Schmitt (2008) consisting of **preactional, actional and postactional** phases for implementation of the study.

With special reference to rural ESL learners at the secondary level, this study aimed at addressing their immediate vocabulary needs. The researcher had carefully chosen five important and relevant vocabulary learning strategies for explicit instruction in the classroom. The five strategies are: **1. keeping a vocabulary notebook (cognitive strategy)**; **2. using a monolingual dictionary (determination strategy)**; **3. guessing the meaning of a word from its context (determination strategy)**; **4. word mapping**
(memory strategy); and 5. framing example sentences (using new words in sentence-memory strategy). Learners were trained how to make use of these five strategies in and outside the classroom. In the strategy training phase, the researcher conducted twenty (20) classroom teaching sessions with explicit instructions in application of strategies. This was followed by the intervention phase in which the researcher conducted thirty (30) sessions on facilitating and enhancing vocabulary learning thorough promoting use of strategies by learners independently, with his supervision. This enabled the learners for acquiring new words with deeper understanding of their meanings and use in context. Thus the study was successful in enhancing vocabulary learning through strategies for both receptive and productive purposes by promoting learner autonomy in the rural ESL classroom.

The current study is a case study. It also entails ethnographic details of rural ELT scenario. It involved twenty rural ESL learners of class IX in English medium instruction. The data was collected employing suitable research tools such as learners’ questionnaires, semi-structured interviews with teachers and learners, classroom observations, pre-test, vocabulary learning strategy inventories, post-tests and verbal reports. The data collected were analysed both qualitatively and quantitatively. Both qualitative and quantitative data revealed that the study created a good impact on rural ESL learners in promoting independent vocabulary learning though different strategies. The study also established the fact that the strategies imparted to the learners were found most useful and effective in the rural ESL context as revealed from the findings of the study.
Chapter 1 provides background information about the study, the research problem and rationale of the study, with a theoretical discussion on vocabulary learning process. The basic assumptions and the theoretical notions regarding vocabulary learning strategies are presented in chapter 2. Chapter 3 deals with the research design, the subjects and the tools used in the study along with a description of how this study was conducted. Chapter 4 discusses the details of the intervention phase along with the collection, analysis and interpretation of the data. Findings and implications of the study are presented in Chapter 5.