

Investigating Lexical Attrition among Secondary School Algerian EFL Learners

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Abstract

The present descriptive and exploratory study aims to explore the effectiveness of Vocabulary Learning Strategies used by intermediate Algerian EFL learners and to test their retention of the target words thereby measuring their vocabulary size. It is based on the works of Oxford (1990) and Schmitt (1997). A vocabulary learning strategies questionnaire adapted from Schmitt's (1997) taxonomy was used to gather data on the students' use of five identified Vocabulary Learning strategies: Determination (DET), Social (SOC), Memory (MEM), Cognitive (COG) and Metacognitive (MET) strategies. A Vocabulary Achievement test was used to evaluate their word retention.

1. 'Shallow' strategies ('taking notes', 'guessing from context' and 'asking classmates') did not cause retention as they did not require manipulation of vocabulary.
2. At a receptive level, students used 'bilingual dictionary', 'guessing from context' and 'asking classmates' strategies to comprehend the meaning of unknown words.
3. At a productive level, 'discovery' strategies were used. Students avoided strategies involving deep mental processing (such as Keyword Method, Semantic Mapping and Spaced Word Practice) and used strategies which cause attrition.

Key words: Attrition, Memory, Retention, Vocabulary, Vocabulary learning strategies.