Effectiveness of the Techniques Applied to Teach Vocabulary in Mbujimayi

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Abstract

This paper is about the mismatch between vocabulary (its nature and importance in language) and the techniques used for teaching it. It is obvious that vocabulary is not solely a given meaning of a word; it is actually the study of the words of a language. Teaching vocabulary is therefore teaching words with their various features that make lexical knowledge. This objective cannot be achieved when depth and breadth of vocabulary do not matter for instructors.

Unfortunately, this study reveals that the techniques dominantly used for teaching vocabulary in Mbujimayi (DRC) are scarcely ever effective in helping teachers impart knowledge of all or the majority of a word's aspects. Visuals, gestures, eliciting and translation that have been the used in teaching vocabulary hardly ever succeeded in helping teachers present information about polysemy, sense relations, collocations, style, idioms and word parts during the vocabulary lessons. To take visuals (as they are the techniques the most applied) as an example, teachers do teach only the words' spelling, pronunciation and only one of its meanings when applying this technique. The rest of word information is ignored (as it is explained in the text).

To solve this problem, I advise teachers to reconsider their choices of the vocabulary teaching techniques and their combination with others paying attention to those likely to achieve lexical competence. I find the use of the dictionary the best technique for teaching vocabulary as the dictionary contains all the elements of vocabulary listed in this paper. Decision makers and teachers should maximise teacher training in dictionary use (in class or out of it) for the good of the learners' lexical instruction.

Key-words: *vocabulary teaching techniques, vocabulary knowledge, use of the dictionary*.

Résumé

Cet article relève l'inadéquation entre la nature et l'importance du vocabulaire dans le développement et l'apprentissage d'une langue (d'une part) et les techniques utilisées pour l'enseignement de ce vocabulaire (d'autre part). Le vocabulaire n'étant pas seulement une question du sens d'un mot donné, il doit être perçu comme l'étude des mots d'une langue dans leur diversité d'aspects. Ainsi, enseigner le vocabulaire c'est enseigner ces mots avec leurs éléments ou propriétés qui constituent la connaissance lexicale. Cette dernière n'est pourtant possible que lorsque les enseignants privilégient l'élargissement et l'approfondissement du vocabulaire.

Très malheureusement, les techniques d'enseignement du vocabulaire en cours d'utilisation à Mbujimayi (RDC) semblent servir à la rétention et la recognition des mots sans donner la chance aux apprenants d'élargir et approfondir le vocabulaire. Ces techniques sont l'utilisation des croquis, objets réels, gestes, questions, et traduction. Elles n'ont pas été appropriés pour transmettre aux apprenants des informations concernant la polysémie, les collocations, les relations des sens, le style, les expressions idiomatiques, la morphologie de mots étudiés. Pour ne prendre que le cas des supports visuels en exemple, rien d'autre que l'orthographe, la prononciation et l'un des sens du mot concerné n'est réellement enseigné aux apprenants.

Pour résoudre ce problème, je conseille que les enseignants de la langue anglaise reconsidèrent leur choix des techniques d'enseignement du vocabulaire afin que l'éclectisme et surtout l'utilisation du dictionnaire amènent les apprenants à des compétences lexicales avérées. Le dictionnaire se propose ici parce qu'il contient toutes les

informations considérées comme propriétés ou éléments des mots. Il apert aux décideurs en matière d'enseignement de penser à la formation des enseignants en cette matière pour qu'ils soient capables de faire exploiter les dictionnaires pendant les leçons.

Mots-clés: *techniques d'enseignement du vocabulaire, connaissance du vocabulaire, utilisation du dictionnaire.*

1. Introduction

As a language teacher, teacher trainer and currently researching on the possibility to consider the dictionary use as a valid alternative to the various techniques used in lexical instruction, I had the impression that the techniques used for teaching vocabulary are scarcely effective especially when I examined the aspects of vocabulary knowledge likely to be imparted to the learners. Motivated by this impression, I studied the effectiveness of those techniques to find out the degree to which they help language teachers to construct their learners' breadth and depth of vocabulary which are the utmost outcomes of a good lexical instruction. As it can be seen, the rationale for choosing this topic is illustrated by the presupposed mismatch between the techniques used in teaching vocabulary and the complex nature of vocabulary itself. As described in the forthcoming sections, the concept of vocabulary is broader than what teachers pretend to teach in class. Teaching words implies teaching their properties or elements, which amounts to achieving depth and breadth of vocabulary. This aim is achievable through the use or application of appropriate teaching techniques. Unfortunately, I doubted about the effectiveness of the techniques applied to achieve that objective. I wondered how visuals, for example, could help one to teach all the word's elements listed in this paper.

Based on the motivation described above, this study aims at investigating the effectiveness of the various techniques used by EFL teachers in teaching vocabulary. To achieve this aim, I address the concepts of vocabulary teaching and vocabulary knowledge; I review the literature about the vocabulary teaching techniques and their usefulness, analyse the data and discuss the findings.

1.1. The Concept of Vocabulary Teaching and Vocabulary Knowledge

Vocabulary is words themselves which people must know to communicate effectively (Neuman & Dwyer 2009: 385) or those taught in the foreign language (Ur 1998), not only word meaning. It is knowledge of words and their meanings (Diamond and Gutlohn 2006), which is simply redundant as words in the lexicon are stored with more than meanings. According to Laufer (1992), five separate categories are involved: word form, structure, syntactic behaviour, meaning, and lexical relations.

Although linguists assume that the exhaustive list of features of word knowledge does not exist yet, Nation's (2001) table is the only list of features of word knowledge nearest to a definitive one. It encapsulates word knowledge in three components: form, meaning and use. Knowledge of form includes spelling, pronunciation, and word formation. Knowledge of meaning includes denotation, connotation and polysemy. Knowledge of use includes the grammar of a word, collocation, style, and idioms. Each facet of knowledge is sub-divided into receptive and productive knowledge (Milton 2013), and obviously contributes to language performance. A language user with extensive knowledge of words in their phonological form but no knowledge of the written form of words, for example, has the potential at least to speak and understand speech but no capacity for reading or writing.

From what precedes, it can be concluded that vocabulary is both the total number of words needed to communication and word knowledge. Accordingly, teaching vocabulary is not merely teaching the meaning of the word as it is found in a given context; it is teaching the word with all its various types of information or features (Thornbury 2002 and Berne & Blachowicz 2008). This process is a central factor in teaching a language (Walters 2004) and one of the most discussed parts of teaching English as a foreign language (Alqahtani 2015).

Although, vocabulary mastery has always been regarded as a developmental process, complete control, knowledge or skill (CACD 2008) is needed or required for the learner to understand a given language, express ideas and be able to understand other people's sayings (Alqahtani 2015). It may be seen as complete control or knowledge of (a) lexical item(s) so as to recognise and use it/them in all the possible contexts. Hatch and Brown (1995) and (Rivers 1989) argue that the biggest responsibility in increasing word knowledge is in the individual learner her/himself. Nevertheless, Kamil and Hierbert (2005) explain clearly that vocabulary holds a special place among all the components of language. Expansion and elaboration of vocabulary extend across lifetime, but opportunities of formal learning are not also so developmental. Teachers should exploit each opportunity to provide learners with both qualitative and quantitative input and examine the means to be used in the classroom for maximising that input.

This knowledge should also be viewed as vocabulary breadth (the number of words a learner knows regardless of the form they are known in or how well they are known) and vocabulary depth (how well or how completely these words are known) (Anderson and Freebody 1981).

I will close this section on vocabulary knowledge with Cremer et al. (2010) who claim that vocabulary knowledge does not only involve knowing a multitude of words, but also necessitates acquiring various types of knowledge regarding each word and creating semantic networks among multiple lexical items. Logically, vocabulary knowledge subsumes breadth and depth of vocabulary (Kiliç 2019). According to Gonzalez-Fernandez and Schmitt (2017), these components of vocabulary knowledge do not grow in a parallel fashion, yet they are related and contribute to one another. Their example is that as the number of words one knows grows, so does the number of word forms (i.e. prefixes and suffixes), which in turn increases the depth of vocabulary knowledge of the speaker. As it can be seen, vocabulary mastery plays an important role in the four language skills and it is the most important component of language. Teaching vocabulary is therefore teaching word knowledge.

2. Review of the Literature

Significant research has been conducted about the techniques used in teaching English. Here, I will focus on studies about the various techniques used to teach vocabulary including the use of the dictionary.

a) Definition and Translation

According to Nation (2000:195-196), learners need to focus on words not only as a part of the message but as words themselves. The teacher's definition of words occurring in a story considerably increases vocabulary learning (Elley 1989 and Brett, Rothlein & Hurley 1996). It decontextualizes or takes the word out of its message context and draws attention to it as a language item before providing its meaning. This viewpoint is almost challenged by another number of studies. Beck & McKeown (1991), Blachowicz & Fisher (2000), Graves & Watts-Taffe (2002), Nagy & Scott (2000), and Shanahan & Beck (2006) revealed that children do not learn words and how to use them through memorizing definitions. Giving students to generate sentences after they were given definitions of unfamiliar words, Miller and Gildea (1987) clearly regretted that little learning had occurred. They concluded that the technique was "pedagogically useless" (Nagy & Scott 2000: 277), which I think is not totally true as defining may work if it is combined with other techniques.

As far as translation is concerned, Folse (2004a) reported a number of studies on its value in incidental lexical instruction. Not aiming to return to the Grammar Translation method, 'translation is both what learners prefer and more effective than English glosses'. Numerous empirical studies have shown the value of L1 translations in vocabulary-learning activities (Hulstijn 1992, Knight 1994, Prince 1995, Chun & Plass 1996, Laufer & Shmueli 1997, Grace 1998, and Laufer & Hulstijn 1998). L1 translation makes the learning of vocabulary faster (Nation 1982) and better (Hulstijn, Hollander and Greidanus 1996). According to Lotto and de Groot (1998) translation enhances word retention scores; and Grace (1998) found it a viable if not a preferable option for many L2 learners at the beginning level. Her results showed that students who had access to a glossary in their L1 were more successful at retaining new vocabulary, probably because they had the opportunity to confirm the correct meanings.

As it can be seen, these studies scarcely mention the contribution of these techniques to the achievement of breadth and depth of vocabulary or vocabulary knowledge.

b) Explaining

Penno, Wilkinson and Moore (1998) studied vocabulary learning from listening three times to stories with a group of young, largely native speakers of English. Vocabulary learning was measured by pre- and post-vocabulary tests and an oral retelling task. Repetition of the story and the explanation of some words during the listening brought learners to grasp more of the previously unknown vocabulary. Vocabulary that was explained during the story was learnt better than that which was not especially for higher ability students.

I wish I found a study on explanation of vocabulary from a reading passage. Besides, I would be happier if I found studies describing the efficacy of this technique in building word knowledge. However feasible the process might be, it may be raised the question of time and learner-centredness in class.

c) Visuals

Techniques such as using objects (realia, visual aids, and demonstration), drawing, illustrations and pictures are all regarded as visuals (Alqahtani 2015). Their importance in vocabulary learning/teaching is to highly motivate foreign language learners to participate in the communication of their thoughts (Hill 1990). Wright (1990) supported that that motivation can make the learning experience of the target language more significant and meaningful. Likewise, Saad and his co-authors (2017), in the light of Brown and Payne's (1994) 5-stage model, noticed that participants in their study had enjoyed pictures as imagination and new vocabulary items learning tools, particularly by the use of picture dictionaries. Concerning the use of picture dictionaries, it was also considered very helpful by a majority of participants. Some years previously, Oxford (1990) and Gairns & Redman (1986) had recommended the creation of classroom activities using picture dictionaries. Nevertheless, it is still questionable as to how visuals alone can cope with many aspects of lexical knowledge other than meaning.

d) Synonymy and Antonymy

 Generally used to teach the word meaning and the sense relations, these techniques give the learners to know additional words in relation with the unknown ones. Tajik (2018) argued that using antonyms is one of the most effective strategies to learn new words and enhance their retention (Schmidt 2008). Powell (1986) reported the three types for antonyms including contradictories or complementary antonyms, contraries and reciprocals or converse antonyms. Focusing on contraries, Tajik (2018) found that teaching new words out of a context might be as helpful as teaching them within the language context. Joining Morsali (2012), he supported that the vocabulary items presented in a list out of a context could be learnt successfully if pictures were used to suggest their meaning and minimise the word disruption. Tajik (2018) also reported that teaching synonyms and antonyms gives language learners the opportunity to enhance their memory for semantically-related words. More specifically, synonyms can facilitate word learning by decreasing cognitive demands as the meaning of the words are rather equal in synonym pairs (Storkel and Maekawa 2005). With these studies, meaning and breadth of vocabulary are the most privileged word aspects when using these techniques. The many other aspects are hardly teachable with them.

e) Enumeration

Alqahtani (2015) and Susanto (2017) reported Gruneberg and Sykes' (1991) explanation of enumeration as a collection of items that is a complete ordered listing of all of the items in that collection. It can be used to present meaning. Unfortunately, no study could be (to the best of my knowledge) found in line with its impact on vocabulary learning.

f) Mime and Gestures

Several studies have emphasised the role of gestures in second language acquisition (Hauge 1999, Sime 2001 and Alqahtani 2015). These studies revealed that teachers tend to gesture a lot to capture attention and make the lesson more dynamic, especially when addressing young learners and/or beginners. Analysing video recordings of English lessons to French students, Tellier (2007) found three main roles for teaching gestures: management of the class (to start/end an activity, request silence, etc.), evaluation (to show a mistake, to correct, to congratulate, etc.) and explanation (to give indications on syntax, underline specific prosody, explain new vocabulary, etc.). Although Tellier insisted on the effect of gestures on memorization as something witnessed by many yet hardly explored systematically and empirically, Hauge (1999) and Sime (2001) had warned that foreign gestures may lead to misunderstandings when they are not known by the learners. As for visuals, meaning is the lexical feature the most taught with these techniques.

g) Eliciting

According to Kumar and Murthy (2020) and Arntsen (https://busyteacher.org/3772-how-to-elicit-vocabulary.html accessed on 10 may 2021), eliciting is not a single technique but an umbrella term for the use of all the other techniques. Case (2008) outlined 15 ways of eliciting all of which are the various techniques. In line with vocabulary, Thornbury (2005) and Harmer (2007a) found that eliciting is a standard procedure for the teachers to present the word meaning, for example by showing a picture and asking them to supply the form.
Although it makes use of many other techniques, it is still questionable as to the coverage of all the aspects of lexical information and. If it is eclectically used with the DBALT, the results may be different.

h) Guessing from Context

With a special focus on reading, guessing from context as a way of dealing with unfamiliar vocabulary in unedited selections (Alqahtani 2015) has been suggested widely by L1 and L2 reading specialists (Dubin 1993). Two types of contexts are acknowledged (Nation and Coady 1988). The first is context within the text or specific context; it includes morphological, semantic and syntactic information in a specific text. The second is non-textual context or the general context; it is the background knowledge the reader has about the subjects being read. Nation and Coady (cited above) agree with Williams (1985) that the specific context is ''the other words and sentences that surround that word…''. By contrast, McCarthy (1988) perceives context only within the text itself i.e. the morphological, syntactic, and discourse information, which can be classified and described in terms of general features. Still according to McCarthy, the activation of guessing in a written or spoken text depends on four elements: *the reader, the text, unknown words, and clues in the text including some knowledge about guessing.* The absence of one of these elements may affect the learner's ability to guess (Alqahtani 2015). Nevertheless, this technique encourages learners to take risks and guess the meanings of words they do not know. This will help them build up their self-confidence so that they can work out the meanings of words when they are on their own. There are many clues learners can use to establish meanings for themselves, such as illustrations, similarity of spelling or sound in the mother tongue, and general knowledge.

In a series of experiments, Hulstijn (1992) compared incidental and intentional vocabulary learning, and guessing from context under several conditions with the meanings being provided. The incidental learning conditions resulted in very low learning scores. In the intentional learning conditions, learning increased substantially. Likewise, Meara (1994) found that absence of one of the elements listed by (McCarthy 1988) may hinder the process of guessing. As a solution, Elley (1989) suggested a sort of generative processing in the use of guessing. Learners need to meet new words in differing contexts in association with pictures and in discussion and negotiation.

In their attempt to reject guessing in reading and vocabulary, Tahririan and Sadri (2013) reported that when L2 readers come across unfamiliar words they adopt one of these three options: (a) ignore and continue reading, (b) consult a dictionary or another individual, or (3) infer its meaning on the basis of linguistic and contextual cues (Fraser 1999 a and b; Prichard 2008; and Prichard & Matsumoto 2011). *Inferencing, although a productive strategy, is found to be not an easy or efficient one for L2 learners because of text complexity or because of reader limitations* (Bensoussan & Laufer 1984; Haastrup 1991). Logically, the consultation of the dictionary is essential as supported below.

In a study on the guessing strategy, Folse (2004a) explained that guessing word meaning and using a dictionary are not mutually exclusive. Learners can guess word meaning first, then consult a dictionary to check on the guess. Thus learners may avoid the negative effects imposed by inaccurate guessing. Achieving his objective of attacking the myth that guessing words from context is as productive for foreign language learners as it is for first language learners, Folse (2004a:6-7) argued that native speakers do not have the same lexical problems as foreign language learners. Foreign language learners most likely face *multiple* unknown words that serve as non-clues or misleading clues (Folse 2002, Folse 2004b). This view is reinforced by Schatz & Baldwin (1986) who explained that even native English speakers are not always very successful at guessing word meanings from real contexts (despite their lexical knowledge) because helpful context clues are rare in real language excerpts. Accordingly, it makes nonsense to expect foreign language learners, who lack the linguistic luxuries possessed by native speakers, to be successful at guessing what native speakers themselves scarcely do.

3. Methodology

This piece of research is a qualitative study which used purposive (expert) sampling for the collection of data. Kumar (2011) explains that this sampling technique helps researchers to gain in-depth understanding of the situation/phenomenon under study. As a non-probability sampling technique, the expert sampling (which is a type of purposive or judgemental types of sampling) exploits the researcher's judgement about to the person who can provide the best information to achieve the objectives of the study. Based on this backbone principle, I considered as my informants only those teachers who in my opinion were likely to have the required information and be willing to share it with me. As teachers of EFL in Mbujimayi vary from graduates in TEFL to truly unqualified teachers (graduates and undergraduates from other fields as well people with simple secondary school degrees), I considered graduates in TEFL as experts (as they are the only ones allowed to teach in terminal classes of secondary school in DRC).

Accordingly, I went only to schools where such teachers were available. As soon as I could no longer find such teachers, I considered the saturation point to be reached. I chose this technique following Tavakoli (2012) who states that qualitative data validity might be addressed through the honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data achieved, the participants approached, the extent of triangulation and the disinterestedness of the researcher.

As it can be seen, data were collected only from qualified teachers (Bac.+ 5) in TEFL. Out of 200 schools organizing the pedagogical section in Mbujimayi, I could identify 50 such teachers of EFL and I considered the data saturation point to be reached. I observed their vocabulary lessons with the aim to notice the techniques applied during these lessons, the aspects of the lexical knowledge taught with the techniques applied and the actions taken by the teachers for the aspects not taught or covered with the techniques applied. In other terms, my structured non-participant observation consisted in identifying the teaching technique(s) applied by the teacher. As far as the aspects of the lexical items are concerned, I checked the teaching on the following: (a) word spelling, (b) its pronunciation, (c) word categories, (d) meaning of words as they are used in the reading passage, (e) the other possible meanings of the same words likely to be found in other contexts, (f) the synonyms of those words (if any), (g) the antonyms of those words (if any), (h) the homonym of those words (if any), (i) their collocations, (j) information on style, (k) possible idioms in line with those words, (l) derivational information (if needed) and (m) inflectional information. The last focus of my observation was the teacher's further action(s) taken to cover the vocabulary elements not taught during the lesson (e.g. an exercise, homework, etc.). In the observation schedule, the teaching techniques were recorded by their names and later given codes as in (4.1.1.) below. The various dimensions of words taught were recorded by means of numbers with nominal value (1-14). The teacher's compensatory action was recorded by the capital letters A, B, C and D as shown in (4.1.3.) below.
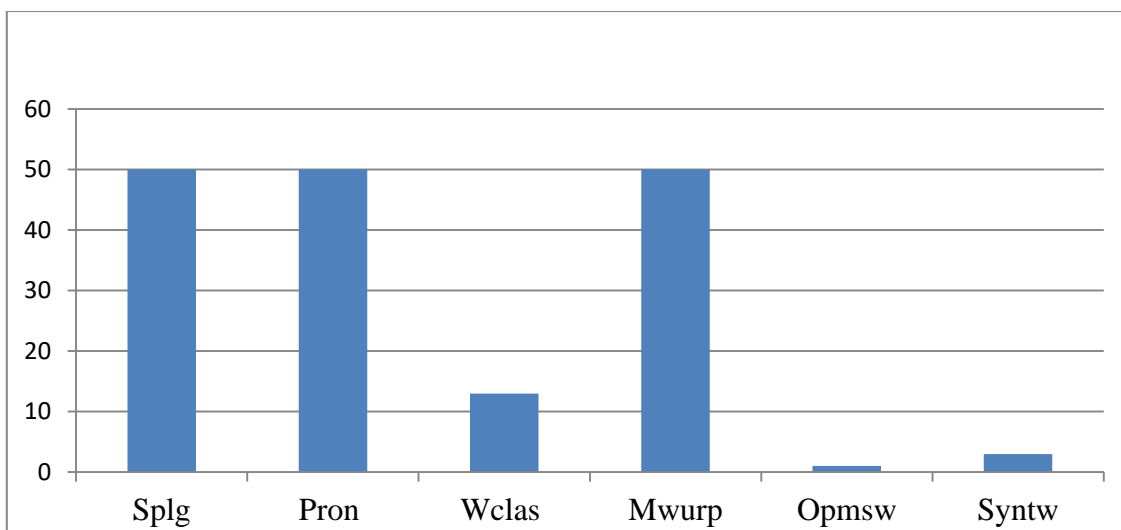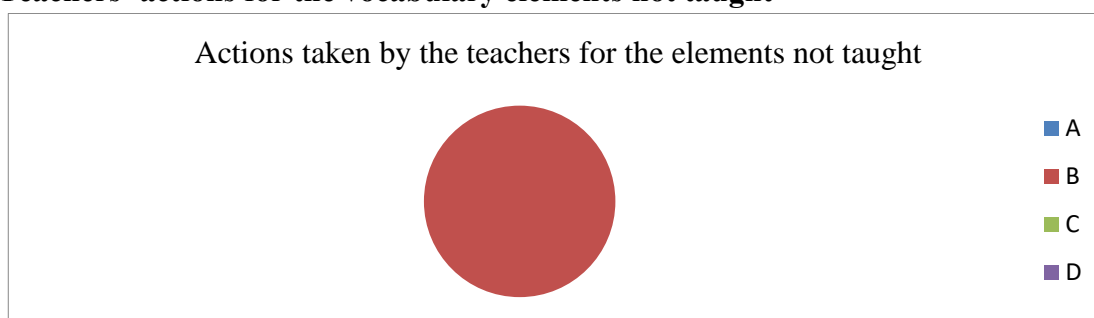
4. Findings and discussion
4.1. Findings
4.1.1. Techniques used during the vocabulary lesson
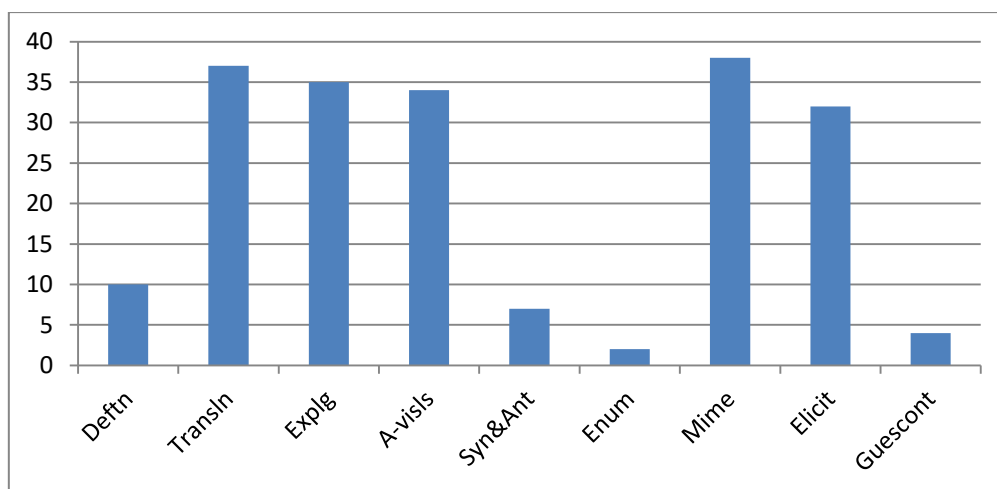
4.1.2. Vocabulary elements taught with the teachers' selected techniques

4.1.3. Teachers' actions for the vocabulary elements not taught

Actions taken by the teachers for the elements not taught

A= an action has been taken during that lesson helping the learners to explore the lexical aspects not covered,

B = no such action is taken,

C = a task that helps learners to know the aspect not covered is assigned to them as homework,

D = the teacher has outlined in the syllabus to teach the aspects not covered with the techniques used.

4.2. Interpretation of the Data

4.2.1. Techniques Used during the Vocabulary Lesson

This was the first objective of this study. I wanted to identify the techniques preferred by teachers of vocabulary in order to examine afterwards their effectiveness in achieving breadth and depth of vocabulary. In fact, it was evident that these techniques were used in an eclectic way. Accordingly, the study revealed that 76% of teachers use mime and gestures, 74% use translation, 70% use explaining as a technique, 68% use visuals (drawings, pictures and real objects), and 64% use eliciting. Apart from these most preferred techniques, definition was used by 20% of teachers, synonyms and opposites (as a teaching technique) were preferred only by 14% of teachers, guessing from context by 8% and enumeration by only 4% of teachers. As it can be seen, the use of the dictionary is totally rejected in this choice and use of the vocabulary teaching techniques.

4.2.2. Vocabulary Elements Taught with the Teachers' Selected Techniques

The second focus of my observation was to identify the elements of vocabulary effectively taught by means of the techniques identified above. In fact, I could notice that all the teachers observed (100%) succeeded to teach spelling, pronunciation and the meaning of the selected words as they could be helmed by the context in the reading passage. Apart from these three vocabulary elements, 26% of teachers could mention word categories and subcategories (grammatical information of words), 6% of teachers could mention synonyms while 2% only could teach polysemy or meaning discrimination.

As it can be noticed, the other vocabulary elements such as antonyms, homonyms, cognates, collocations, stylistics labels, idioms and other fixed expressions, and word formation information are not part of the teachers' menu during the vocabulary lesson. This could provisionally lead me to infer that depth of vocabulary is put at stake with this partial or superficial treatment of vocabulary. As many elements of vocabulary that achieve its depth are also needed

for achieving its breadth, the latter was also hindered by the techniques selected and used during the vocabulary lesson.

4.2.3. Teachers' Actions for the Vocabulary Elements not Taught with their Techniques

My last focus of attention was to identify the types of actions taken by teachers of English in order to cover the elements of vocabulary which they did not have teach with the techniques selected and used. The study revealed that all the teachers visited (100%) did not take any further action likely supplement the partial treatment of vocabulary during their lessons with the elements left out. In other terms, no homework or assignment in the sense of enriching the vertically or horizontally the words taught, no specific exercises in relation with depth and breadth of vocabulary, not even a slight reference to the use of reference sources (dictionaries) could be noticed during the lessons. I paid special attention to the teachers' syllabuses or outlines to check whether they could have planned for teaching these neglected vocabulary elements; but as the results show, no teacher (0%) had done it.

In fact, the study shows clearly that the teachers of English prefer teaching vocabulary using gestures, translation, explaining, visuals (drawings, pictures and real objects), and eliciting. Unfortunately, they do not succeed to teach the majority of vocabulary elements which trigger breadth and depth of vocabulary during the lesson. Besides, teachers also omit to take actions likely to recuperate their students with the vocabulary elements they fail to teach with their selected techniques. I then point out both a gap and a prejudice for the students' learning of this fundamental component of English language.

4.3. Discussion

4.3.1. Techniques the Most Used

The study has revealed that mime and gestures as well as visuals are the techniques the most preferred and the most used to teach vocabulary. They are followed by translation, explaining and eliciting. The other techniques (preferred: definition 23%, synonyms and opposites 14%, guessing 12% and enumeration 9%) are less. This discussion will first address each technique (or range of techniques as grouped in the study) separately before discussing their value with regards to their preference and use.

a) Visuals, Mime and Gestures

Visual materials are very important in teaching English as they commit information to long-term memory and most of what is learnt goes through visual medium (Porter and Margaret 1992). They motivate learners to speak, to create a context with which their speech will have meaning. For Allen (1983), Sanusi (2009), Klippel (1994) and Tellier (2007), they should be used as often as possible as they help learners understand the meaning and remember the word learnt. This technique helps learners to infer the meaning of a spoken word or expression, provided that they are unambiguous and easy to understand (Alqahtani 2015). As it can be seen, visuals stress on *the meaning of the word as it is used in the reading passage or in speech, word retention and motivation for learning and communication.*

However, there exists a plethora of facts challenging the use of the visuals and showing their limitations especially concerning the achievement of breadth and depth of vocabulary. First, I think that word retention and just one meaning for a word should not be regarded as the only concern of a vocabulary lesson. In other terms, visuals do not explore as many aspects word knowledge as needed by the foreign language learners in order to be able to use the same word in a variety of contexts.

Another limitation of visuals (especially gestures) is their cultural interpretation by the learners (Tellier 2007, Alqahtani 2015). Gestures that are not culturally recognizable by the learners may lead to misunderstandings (Hauge 1999 and Sime 2001). In my opinion, they are worth using for enhancing memorisation and word retention, and not for achieving breadth and depth vocabulary.

b) Translation

Unlike the rejection of translation reported in the review of the literature, this study reveals that it is among the techniques the most used to teach vocabulary in Mbujimayi matching Folse's (2004:5-6) argument that translation is both what learners prefer. Unfortunately, it is not quite true that translation may help teachers to cover all the aspects of lexical knowledge. I add that these translations given by the teacher may also better be given by bilingual dictionaries.

c) Explanation

Penno,Wilkinson and Moore (2002) support that the explanation of difficult words during the listening or reading activities brings learners to grasp a lot of new vocabulary. Explanation may cover the meaning and the use of a foreign word in the foreign language. Even if this was not the case during my observation of the vocabulary lessons, explanation may include a number of other techniques (Elley 1989): word-building from suffixes, prefixes, and roots, guessing word meanings from context clues, and definition clues (comprising the parentheses and footnotes, and synonyms and antonyms). This combination of many other techniques would have had the advantage to cover more aspects than isolated techniques could do. Unfortunately, the findings have revealed the opposite. This finding surprised me as to the rebirth of this traditional method which is largely teacher-centred. Explaining is an expository technique that involves the teacher in the main part of the class activities, putting the learner-centredness at stake. Learner-centred teachers do not employ a single teaching method. They use a variety of different types of methods that shifts the role of the teachers from givers of information to facilitators in student learning. Still according to the same author, teachers traditionally focused on what they did, and not on what the students are learning. Nunan (2013:92) explains that the learner-centred key decisions about what will be taught, how it will be taught, when it will be taught, and how it will be assessed will be made with reference to the learner. Information about learners, and, where feasible, from learners, will be used to answer the key questions of what, how, when, and how well.

d) Eliciting

To acknowledge the advantages of this teaching technique, it draws information from students, generally by asking questions rather than telling them everything through teacher explanation (Scrivener 2012:139). It is an active technique that allows interaction between the teacher and the learners. Largely supported by many language teaching researchers, eliciting combines many other techniques discussed such as pictures, miming, gestures, etc. with the question-answer technique (Chitravelu, Sithamparan & Choon 2005). Opposites, synonyms, definitions, recalling, memory, stress clues, multiple choice, brainstorming, spider diagrams or mind maps, common mistakes, and visuals, multimedia are also used in elicitation (Case 2008). As to the advantages of elicitation, it leads to greater involvement, encourages thinking, pushes students to self-discoveries, and takes the biggest part of classroom interaction (Scrivener 2012: 139), it can facilitate students' speaking and provide large opportunity of language practice and increases more students' talking time, and at the same time offers opportunities to practice speaking (Usman et Al. 2018), it can be used for many lessons such as speaking (including pronunciation), grammar and vocabulary (Doff as cited in Sasmita et Al. 2017), Alqahtani 2015, and Kumar & Murphy 2020).

Despite this appraisal of elicitation, I find, however, more interesting and pertinent the criticisms against it. Used for students to inform, confirm, agree with the teacher, commit themselves to a task, repeat or clarify something, eliciting in language classrooms may have the following possible disadvantages outlined by Case (2009 replicated by Usman et Al. 2018). First, it can just be a wasting-time procedure. Second, an active student can dominate the class to answer all of elicitation. Third, students may not have any idea, and elicitation would be failed by silence. Fourth, eliciting will make boring when questions are repetitive. Focusing on the first three criticisms, I support that, in teaching vocabulary, eliciting may still be important but it will show ineffective as to specific aspects of word knowledge such as idioms, style, synonyms and opposites, polysemy and collocations for which the second and the third criticisms will provoke the first one (time management). More explicitly, this technique can better cover as many elements of a lexical item as possible provided the learner's level allows it. In a nutshell, elicitation is poorly applied and fails to cover all the elements of vocabulary and results into poor vocabulary instruction.

To close the discussion about the first finding, I still support that the choice of the teaching techniques is the teachers' responsibility. As suggested by Alqahtani (2015), a good teacher should prepare himself/herself with various and up-to-date techniques and suitable material in order to gain the target of language teaching. Accordingly, the choice of the vocabulary teaching techniques should take into account, apart from learner motivation and word retention, the achievement of breadth and depth of vocabulary.

4.3.2. The Vocabulary Elements Taught

With those techniques, the vocabulary elements outstandingly taught are the meaning of words as they are used in the reading passage attested; spelling, and pronunciation. The teaching of vocabulary should never be confined to solely teaching the meaning of the word as it is found in the reading passage. Among others of Nattinger's (2013) suggestions can be mentioned word families, morphological features of words, polysemy, synonyms and opposites,

collocations, idioms and prefabricated phrases, etc. Nattinger (2013:81) insists that teaching should utilise insights from lexical theory as ways of activating the organised lexicon. Borrowing elements from the lexical theory challenges the finding under discussion. Nattinger wonders if learners at elementary and lower levels can be expected to grapple with notions like collocation and hyponymy. The answer to such a question can be vaguely perceived through McCarthy (1984) who thinks that it is feasible, but raising the new question about the types of exercises and activities that can be devised without frightening learners off. Addressing the issue of the learners' need, Channell (1981) and Carter and McCarthy (2013: 49) explain that what the learner needs to know about a word is how it relates to words of similar meaning and which other words it can be used with. Clearly, meanings should be taught as well as sense relations, style and collocations. This viewpoint is also held by Folse (2004) who describes the reality for *foreign* language learners that they need to learn words, phrases, and idioms, and they need a tremendous amount of explicit vocabulary instruction in a relatively (and artificially) short time.

This confinement to meaning seems to be supported by Rivers' (1983: 124) consideration of Halliday's (1975) construct of 'meaning potential' as all-important (i.e. speakers can say, they can mean). In my opinion, even this meaning-oriented teaching of vocabulary challenges the results in that giving the learners the means to mean in a language where the vast majority of words (especially high frequency ones) are highly polysemantic does not mean teaching just one meaning per selected word.

To shift to more consistent arguments against this partial superficial teaching of vocabulary, I rely on Moeller, Ketsman and Masmaliyeva (2009:1) according to whom word knowledge is power as words serve as building blocks to learning. They strongly wish that students should acquire the essential vocabulary needed to comprehend the content and information they encounter in many texts. One of the major roles of the teacher then becomes to assist students to learn vocabulary as well as to equip them with strategies for learning words. More explicitly, vocabulary is not meant to be the equivalent of word meaning (as teachers have shown in the findings), but words themselves (Berne & Blachowicz 2008, Thornbury 2002). Neuman & Dwyer (2009: 385) argue that vocabulary is words that people must know to communicate effectively and that is comfortable with Ur's (1998) statement that vocabulary is the words taught in the foreign language. Diamond and Gutlohn (2006) assume that vocabulary is knowledge of words and their meanings." In my viewpoint, words in the lexicon are not only outlined with their meanings; they are stored with many other features that should be regarded as part of vocabulary. Prince (1996: 488) states that simply knowing one aspect of L2/FL words does not guarantee successful use in a target context" because knowing a word means knowing more than just its translated meaning or its synonyms.

Laufer's (1992) explanation of what knowing a word actually implies may help teachers to understand that they are teaching poorly. According to her, knowledge of a word or vocabulary includes five separate categories: (1) the form of the word (spelling and pronunciation), (2) word structure, (3) the syntactic behaviour of the word, (4) meaning (including referential meaning (subsuming homonyms, polysemes, idioms etc.), affective meaning, and its pragmatic meaning), and (5) lexical relations (the word's relationship to other words and their meanings (synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy), as well as its collocations). Unlike Miller (1999) who poses that even though a learner could not describe a word or state all of its features, that learner is not completely oblivious to that word; Nation (2001) provides an explanatory list of features of word knowledge in a chart. Those features are summarised as form, meaning and use, which echoes Richards' (1976) consideration of the knowledge that is assumed by lexical competence' as the basis for formulating objectives in vocabulary teaching and for the assessment of teaching techniques. Nation's vocabulary features are shared by Carter and McCarthy (2013: 44) in terms of characterization of lexical competence. Besides, McCarthy and O'Dell (1999) argue that knowing a word means not only the meaning of the word but also the other words with which it is usually associated, the words' particular grammatical characteristics, and its pronunciation. For them, adjectives should be learnt with the nouns they may determine or qualify; verbs should be presented with their complementation, nouns should appear in phrases, prepositions with their prepositional complements, and any grammatical characteristics of the word being learnt should not be left out (e.g. irregular verbs).

Although he excludes pronunciation from 'form' explaining that the sound may not correspond to the spelling (e.g. *sign*), Riddell (2014) agrees with Nation (cited above). For, Riddell, syllabication and stress constitute another level of the vocabulary problem as some words have shifting stress, e.g. *his conduct/to conduct*. He also mentions difficulties related to consonant clusters and those specific learners might have with certain sounds. He next mentions that some words with different spellings and meanings are pronounced the same (e.g. *bear/bare*). Nevertheless, Ridell acknowledges with me that pronunciation is a lexical dimension part of the vocabulary lesson.

The salient argument would be borrowed from Schmitt (2000). According to him, the potential knowledge that can be known about a word is rich and complex. Accordingly, the different kinds of knowledge proposed by Nation (1990:31) must be mastered for a person to pretend knowing a word. Furthermore, when I examine the five key aspects of word knowledge suggested in Nagy and Scott's (2000) argument, I find them so interrelated that the incremental aspect should not absolutely gain ascendancy over the others. Apart from the incremental nature of vocabulary (the idea that words are known to varying degrees of complete knowledge), the second aspect concerns *polysemy* (words have multiple meanings and shades of meanings, which means that context must be used to find the intended meaning). If the teacher leaves out this lexical aspect because of the incremental nature of vocabulary, not only does s/he violate the principle according to which words must be put in different contexts in which the learner may find them; but also does s/he create paucity of lexical knowledge in case no other activity is devised for that purpose. The third aspect is *multidimensionality* (words are multidimensional or multi-componential). This implies that teaching a word is teaching, if not all its components or dimensions, at least their vast majority. As it has been shown in the literature reviewed in this study, the richer the vocabulary knowledge, the more proficient the user. *Interrelatedness* is the fourth aspect of lexical knowledge. It implies that word knowledge is represented by a configuration of relation in a semantic network of words. In fact, the semantic interrelation between words should be exploited as an opportunity to teach breadth of vocabulary. The last of their aspects is *heterogeneity* (different kinds of words require different kinds of word knowledge). Focusing on this aspect, I cannot imagine that if a word requires different kinds of word knowledge then it must be taught superficially hiding behind the incremental nature of vocabulary knowledge. Imagine that one learns the verb *to see* with its perception meaning and the teachers stops there because vocabulary instruction or learning is believed to be incremental. The features of this word as an irregular stative verb as well as many others should be taught the learner by varying the context and activities or exercises. This is the place where the learner-centred use of the dictionary can play an important role in enriching the learner's vocabulary. Incrementality should not be the place where partiality, superficiality and paucity of vocabulary teaching originate. As it has been demonstrated, the interrelationship between the aspects of polysemy, multidimensionality, interrelatedness and heterogeneity does not support the absolute incrementality in vocabulary teaching.

Vocabulary lessons should aim at achieving breadth and depth of vocabulary (Anderson and Freebody 1981), which consist of more than merely one meaning per word (Henriksen 1999, Read 2000, Meara and Wolter 2004, Milton 2013). To come back to the question about the impossibility for a learner to master all the facets of word knowledge, I would share the idea of vocabulary expansion and elaboration discussed by Kamil and Hierbert (2005). According to them, although expansion and elaboration of vocabularies is something that extends across a lifetime, opportunities of formal learning are not also so developmental. Teachers should exploit each opportunity to provide learners with both qualitative and quantitative input. They are not expected to master every aspect of word knowledge, but the quality and quantity of their lexical knowledge matters as to their production and reception activities. As it can be explained with (Bauer 2001), words have powerful magic. For example, when the chancellor calls professor Buhendwa, professor Majambo cannot say "here I am". When a medical doctor says "urinate" in hospital, the term is not as offensive as when it is said in a bus. Likewise, the verb "copulate" seems to be less distasteful than "fuck". If the case of the verbs "lay" and "lie" can serve as a basis of evidence for the magic of words, the teachers' responsibility may clearly appear serious. At the same time, *lay* is a lemma for the irregular transitive verb (changing into laid, laying) which means *to put down so as to lie flat*, *to set in proper order, to cause to lie flat, to make a statement in an official way, etc.*; and the simple past form of the irregular intransitive verb "lie". The latter also has got panoplies of meanings such as *to be in a flat position on a surface, to put the body into such a position, to be in a stated position, to be kept in the stated condition or position, etc.* To all these details should be added the adjectival nature of "lay" and the homonymic status of 'lie' whose meaning I described above and its meaning of *telling of is not true.* From what precedes, it is clear that word knowledge is very important and the responsibility of imparting it explicitly to the learners rests on the vocabulary teachers' shoulders.

I close the discussion of this fundamental finding of this study with the recommendation of the national curriculum in the democratic Republic of Congo which also challenges it. In fact, Edipeps (2007:4) recommends teachers to achieve breadth and depth of vocabulary.

4.3.3. The Compensatory Action Taken by Teachers to Cover the Vocabulary Elements Ignored.

Like in Tshimanga (on going), the gap would have been tolerable for teachers who covered very few elements of lexical items during the vocabulary lesson if they had planned for covering the rest of elements by specific actions taken during the lesson or mentioned in their syllabuses. Unfortunately, I observed the vocabulary lessons and checked the teachers' syllabuses during that observation, but I could not notice any actions in relation with deepening and enlarging the learners' vocabulary during or after the lesson. Here is the picture of the gap: no homework assigned to the learners, no reference to the consultation the dictionary in class or out of it, no exercises for recycling (Schmitt 2000: 137), consolidation and elaboration of vocabulary. Challenging this finding, Nation (1990: 44) suggests that recycling requires five to sixteen or more repetitions for a word to be learnt. If recycling is neglected, many partially known words will be forgotten and neither depth nor breadth of vocabulary will be achieved. Teachers should look for ways to bolster learner input to offset this. Schmitt (2000 cited above) argues that, in explicit vocabulary instruction, recycling has to be consciously built into any study programme. Teachers must guard against presenting a word once and then forgetting about it, or else their students will do the same. This implies developing a more structured way of presenting vocabulary that reintroduces words repeatedly in classroom activities. Furthermore, learning activities themselves need to be designed to require multiple manipulations of a word, such as in vocabulary notebooks in which students have to go back and add additional information about the words (Schmitt & Schmitt, 1995).

Against the superficiality of vocabulary teaching, Terrell (1982) recommends to teach high frequency vocabulary, less slang, few idioms, a high incidence of 'names' instead of pro-forms to achieve breadth and depth of vocabulary. Another suggestion comes from Dorothy Brown (1974) with the 'eight Cs and a G' of vocabulary teaching: (1) collocation, (2) clines (e.g. scales such as *cold/warm/hot* expressed diagrammatically), (3) clusters (something akin to the Hallidayan notion of sets and field theory), (4) cloze procedures, which reinforce clusters and collocations, (5) context (using features within the text such as definition, word analysis, inference), (6) consultation (using dictionaries and thesauri), (7) cards: students should keep a card index of new vocabulary, (8) creativity: students should be given free rein to describe pictures, etc. and (9) guessing.

5. Conclusion

This paper aimed at demonstrating that the techniques currently and maximally used to teach vocabulary in Mbujimayi are not effective. The techniques fail to cover the majority of the words aspects or vocabulary elements. Instead of achieving breadth and depth of vocabulary, those techniques are better likely to achieve word retention, memorisation, and text comprehension. Teachers of English are invited to reconsider their choices of the vocabulary teaching techniques paying attention to those likely to achieve lexical competence.

Along the discussion, evidences were given about the ineffectiveness the techniques applied to teach vocabulary and suggestions were made to straighten the situation. The backbone of those suggestions is the use of the dictionary, which will be formulated as a theory in my forthcoming paper. It has been found the best technique for teaching vocabulary as the dictionary contains all the elements of vocabulary listed in this paper. The dictionary is both the lexicon and its container. Teaching language neglecting the maximal exploitation of its nucleus is not teaching at all. Decision makers and teachers should maximise teacher training to enable teachers to use the dictionary in class for the good of the learners' lexical instruction.

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