Effective Grasp of Islamic Terminology:
Challenges and Prospects

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Abstract:

In English for Islamic Studies colleges, students are urged to recall and comprehend a broad spectrum of words related to different branches. However, coming across the proper formula of drilling might pose controversy. Being blessed with a rich repertoire of vocabulary is leading to successfully learn the foreign language, and mnemonic skills play a vital role to retain heavy loads of specialized vocabulary. Accordingly, the importance of vocabulary learning surpasses that of grammar and pronunciation because the possession of a rich vocabulary bank saves from weakening the incapacity to express oneself freely and transmit whatever idea. This research paper aims at exploring and identifying the difficulties faced when students learn Islamic vocabulary in particular, then proposing some resolutions to minimize the degree of hardships. 150 graduate students from seven specialties at the faculty of Islamic Studies, Algiers 1 University were given an online questionnaire during 2020-2021 academic year, and teachers focus group discussion was adopted to collect the data required. A quantitative-qualitative approach was adopted to conduct this study. Results obtained indicated that participants encounter problems in learning Islamic vocabulary and guessing the meaning of words with varying degrees regarding their domains of specialization. In addition, the majority of Islamic learners retained contextulised words more than words given in the form of unconnected lists. This investigation accentuates the paramount importance of sensitizing both teachers and students not to disregard the essential role vocabulary knowledge plays in English as a foreign laguage leaning situations.

Keywords: English vocabulary; Islamic Studies; mnemonic; problems; recalling.

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1. Introduction:

Learning the foreign language requests emphasis on all its districts much like grammar, vocabulary, discourse and skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing since these codes and skills together construct the backbone of the language. Despite the dissimilarity marked in perspectives about the foreign language teaching and learning, a common view has been seen in manners of describing the correlated language areas: grammar and vocabulary (Doff & Jones, 2005; Liu, 2014; Alquahtani, 2015). Thus, debate continued to consider the close link established between vocabulary and grammar as shown by Pan and Xu (2011) along with Hyso and Tabaku (2011) that each part complements the other and it would be fruitless if the inseparable domains were treated disjointly. Another outlook pioneered by Noori (2022) put more burden on the significance of vocabulary in the first position rather than grammar importance; possession of poor vocabulary stock can systematically impede the development of oral and written skills whereas the reverse order does not hamper the achievement of proficiency in either oral or written language.

The question turning on what is vocabulary and attributing accurate definitions broadens the territory of reflection by many scholars and practitioners. Thereon, Nash and Snowling defined vocabulary as ''the knowledge of words and their meanings'' (2005, p.335).Moreover, vocabulary is referred to words conveying meanings because words are those elementary elements constituting the language, correspondingly Heidari, Karimi, and Imani asserted that

Words are the buiding blocks of a language since they label objects, actions, ideas without which people cannot convey the intended meaning (2012, p. 1488).

Yet, research in vocabulary studies is an ongoing process, Brezina and Gabblasova's subsequential work adds more significance; ergo, they classified vocabulary into three types (general, academic, medical), general or core vocabulary touches words that repeatedly occur in different communicative settings (texts, genres,…etc) (Brezina & Gabblasova, 2015; 2017). Hitherto, endeavors to provide convenient definitions to the term vocabulary led to the unveiling of opposing and supportive opinions. The prevailing standpoint revolved around the representation of vocabulary as words with meanings, then, the nuances appeared in whether or not

vocabulary words should be contextualized or defined as isolated lists by using dictionaries.

In English as a foreign language environments, learners are asked to learn and retain an unlimited number of related-words so that they become fluent and achieve high levels of proficiency at productive and receptive skills. The context of Islamic studies is one of the exceptional learning spheres which demand meticulous cogitation when it comes to designing the pertinent vocabulary teaching and learning strategies. In successive studies of Akramy, emphasis placed on the indispensable requirements to attentively select the fitting teaching techniques and strategies (Akramy, 2022); furthermore, stress directed towards teachers who are compelled to take the lion's share in assuming the responsibility of helping students learn and acquire vocabulary successfully (Akramy et al., 2022).

Inquiry in vocabulary studies has been increased since the last decade as in its early years it was still immature. The central role vocabulary owns within the English as a foreign language framework tends to be visible and undeniable, but research in how to find out what can act as suitable teaching strategies or get rid of ill-suited procedures is insufficient and there is an urgent need for rethinking this subject matter (Namaziandost et al., 2020). In English for academic purposes terrain in general and English for Islamic Studies district in particular, students are nonnative speakers of English; thus, learning and acquiring new words of the foreign language paves the way for a myriad of difficulties to remember, comprehend, construct an abundant, well-supplied vocabulary repository.

The primary aims of the present work are first to explore and identify Islamic students' weaknesses and strengths in learning new vocabularies, then, to propose some workable solutions to the current research problem.

With reference to the afore-discussed issues, three main questions are raised as follows:

- What are the common vocabulary learning strategies students of Islamic studies rely on?
- What are the major difficulties students of Islamic Studies encounter when learning specialized vocabulary?
- What are the main vocabulary teaching techniques and strategies adopted by most EFL teachers at the Faculty of Islamic Studies, Algiers 1 university?

2. Influential Vocabulary Learning Strategies:

2.1 Context-Based Vs. out- of- context Dichotomies:

At an earlier time, limelight had set on grammar rather than vocabulary; it had been claimed that vocabulary knowledge could occur through grammar instructions. Research has shown that interest in vocabulary studies had been insubstantial before the 1980s under the dominance of early traditional teaching methods, then an increasing care grew up from 1990s (Ahmed, 2012). Likewise, Beltran, Contesse, and Lopez confirmed that

During the 1980s, however, interest in vocabulary teaching and learning grew, and during the 1990s, a great deal of attention was given to vocabulary as a key component in L2 learning for successful communication (2012, p.1).

Lack of interest that marked previously engendered theoretical deficiencies about vocabulary learning processes and effective strategies used to boost EFL learners' vocabulary knowledge and language competence. Thenceforth, along with the augmenting concern in searching how vocabulary studies is profitably learnt and taught, a vast array of trends and fresh approaches have been evolving. From this stance, leading viewpoints move back and forth from adherents of vocabulary contextualized learning to vocabulary decontextualized learning.

In the light of context-oriented vocabulary learning strategies, the basic principle lies in the fact that attributing meanings to words from context tends to be beneficial in EFL contexts. Thus, an active flow of multifaceted approaches, techniques and strategies has been emerging as long as flourishing focus on second language acquisition (SLA) is considered (Sabbah, 2018).

Vocabulary learning and teaching taxonomies have been introduced in miscellaneous tracks, and that what brought controversy in this scope of research. Richards and Renandya (2012) labelled vocabulary teaching and learning as direct/explicit, and indirect/implicit in the sense that direct occurs autonomously relying

on supports such as dictionaries; however, indirect learning and teaching take place through that exposition to texts and different sources urging learners to form word meanings from the context. Therefore, acquiring or learning vocabulary of the foreign language might happen by adopting one of many-sided divisions to vocabulary acquisition.

It is necessary to go back to the momentous vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) classification of Schmitt's (1997) because it has been fundamental for following undertakings. Schmitt's belief had been the categorization ov VLS into two chunks one named Discovery strategies and the other known consolidation strategies (Alahmadi & Foltz, 2020). Beneath each segment a mass of strategies have been resulted to basically depend on either context-directed or out-of-context directed approaches. Accordingly, context plays a prominent role in vocabulary learning and acquisition, as it is asserted by Kozeta and Tabaku (2011), context is eminently gaining acceptation and is becoming powerful in English vocabulary learning. The attainment of proficiency in both oral and written English does not come out that EFL students recognize, memorize and recall new words in isolation but rather an immense consideration of Krashen and Terrel's (1983) trend that presented binding as a driving factor to acquire vocabulary successfully tends to be significant;

Terrell defined the term 'binding' as

Cognitive and affective mental process of linking a meaning to a form. The concept of binding is what language teachers refer to when they insist that new word ultimately be associated directly with its meaning and not with a translation (1986, p. 214)

Respectively, EFL learners are expected to guess the meanings of new words without using any dictionaries as revealed by Prisca (2013); learners' mother tongue language interference cannot help in vocabulary acquisition efficiently and translation from L1 to the target language in such cases would be fruitless.

Later a conflicting standpoint stated that translation-based vocabulary learning strategy tends to be suitable and effective in foreign language settings (Joyce, 2016). In addition, the former position indicated that the combination of L1 translation (using a dictionary) and L2 definition can advantageously affect the process of English vocabulary acquisition.

2.2 Incidental Vs. Intentional Learning:

Carrying out unceasing studies in the field of vocabulary learning and teaching sparks the interest of numerous researchers. Probing into how learners learn new words of the foreign language enlarged the boundaries of discussion. On that event, two modes have been found influential in vocabulary learning and teaching orbit, incidental and intentional. Krashen (1989) made known that ESL learners are unaware of their learning process since it happens unconsciously and all the attentive concern put on the message rather the form. Incidental learning is defined by Barcoft (2015) as ''picking up new words from context without intending to do so'' and this occurs so specially when being exposed to linguistic input through reading texts or in dialogues there is a strong push to guess or infer meanings of new words (p. 41).

On the other hand, intentional vocabulary learning "ocurs by deliberately attempting to commit new information to memory […] intentional learning implies the use of deliberate retention techniques" (Sinyashina, 2020, p. 93). Correspondingly, the incidental learning is implicit while the intentional is explicit. In intentional learning, learners consciously retain new vocabularies and their awareness tends to be active. Learners who are nonnative speakers of English can invest in both vocabulary learning categories, incidental and intentional, in order to enhance their vocabulary acquisition. For instance, incidental learning manner can be benefical for advanced learners whereas the intentional mode can help beginners to successfully acquire vocabularies (Alemi, 2011).

3. Vocabulary Learning with the Electronic Brain:

3.1 Memory and EIS Vocabulary Knowledge:

Vocabulary is extremely essential in foreign language are or English for specific purposes (ESP) sector (Islamic Studies, Business, Science, … etc). ESP course designers profoundly account for some aspects, one of them is ESP learners' needs so that the desired target language teaching learning objective can be attained that is mainly the development of ESP learners' communicative skills. ESP vocabulary is divided into three kinds: specialized, sub-technical, and general; nevertheless, all these types complete each other to ensure communicative advancements in the target language (Woodrow, 2018).

It is forthwith worth discussing the relationship between learning and memory. Thereon, memory is the core of both the brain and the mind, and it is a boon for humans since every act in life is related to memory (Right, 2015). Andall (2007) and Dehn (2008) distinguished between short-term memory and long-term or working memory despite the wide range of opposing stances displaying the notion of interchangeability between the two constructs (for more details see table 1).

The brain is intricate, and explaining how the learning process happens tends to be hard. Recently, a Neurolinguistic Approach has been recommended and it insists on the preeminence of context in learning vocabulary; in such cases, decontextualized learning would be useless (Germain, 2018). Yet, the brain's obscurity can be described in terms of how and when particular neurons can be activated depending on the neural mechanisms to process information/ words (heard, spoken, read, written) (Ibid.).

An entire understanding of how memory functions throughout a long process including a number of phases (decoding, storing, retrieving) is not an easy task to handle. Consequently, sorting out workable models for vocabulary learning in EFL milieu is difficult as well (Yilmaz, 2015). Mnemonics techniques are widely used in

different language learning contexts and they are noticed to be utile (Khan, 2008). Midttun (2016) delineated two pathways as basic and propitious: visualization and linking strategies. From multiple learning approaches, methods, techniques, strategies that have been refined for vocabulary acquisition principally, teachers are in charge of choosing the suited ones in regard with students' needs; each instructor might design an accurate learning model that directly responds to the requirements of learning the target language and vocabulary in particular.

3.2 Apps, Software, and Vocabulary Retention:

In former times, vocabulary was taught and learnt traditionally and in most cases that happens in classroom by embracing teacher-centered approaches as the golden, most-fitting educational modalities. Then, educational revolution presented itself to transform the dogma from paper-oriented towards scientific technology-oriented instructions (Kohnke & Ruofei, 2019; Tan et al., 2020; Duong, Tran & Nguyen, 2021). Vocabulary learning has captured interest exceptionally with the ascending technological and scientific growth and expansion in education (Calvo-Ferrer & Belda-Medina, 2021).

Investigation in technologically- guided vocabulary learning field has been extensively explored and this has resulted in affording ample opportunities to improve English vocabulary learning and teaching in all contexts (EFL, ESL, ESP, EIS, …etc). Gamified Apps approach has been widely favoured for teaching and learning vocabulary due to positive outcomes gained in vocabulary retention (Yang, Luying, Shuang, &Yang, 2021; Victor & Weimin, 2022; Yang & Shuang, 2022). Learning English vocabulary through educational games has been enormously prevailing, but the notion of gamification denotes a relative newness in the educational scene (Sheldon, 2011). After all, discussions about gamification is still ongoing, Alayub Ahmed et al. 's (2022) contribution suggested the practicality of Kahoot game-directed education to promote vocabulary recall and retention.

For all that, queries and inquiries in technologically-based language learning stays receiving enhanced value and a growing significance among researchers. From this angle, the penetration of smart phones in societies and human being's life led to the birth of mobile vocabulary learning by means of multitudinous apps. Learning via mobiles may add freshness and novelty to the educational process especially with the swift progress of applied science breakthroughs. Harmoniously, Zammit pointed out that

> The advent of the digital era introduced new modes of teaching as a means to keep up with the growing need and use of digital technologies (2022, p. 1).

Along with the wave of technological revolution marked in recent years, Hybrid learning and teaching was encouraged by some Islamic institutions, and it has been proofed efficient and fruitful since the majority of Islamic learners enjoyed hybrid learning of Islamic content as that positively influenced learners' achievement in English skills (Djamdjuri et al. 2021). In this regard, Sukiman et al. (2022) affirmed that Coronavirus outbreak highly sensitized to endorse hybrid teaching and learning as a matter of urgency even in post Coronavirus pandemic.

Table 1. Distinctions between STM and WM
An illustrative example to make the difference

STM	WM
Passively holds information.	Actively processes it.
Capacity is domain specific (verbal and visual).	Capacity is less domain specific. WM has stronger relationships with academic learning and with higher-level cognitive functions.
Automatically activate information stored in long-term memory.	Consciously directs retrieval of desired information from long-term memory.
Has no management functions.	Has some executive functions.
Can operate independently of long-term memory.	Operations rely heavily on long-term memory structures.
Retains information coming from the environment.	Retains products of various cognitive processes.

Source: Dehn, 2008, p. 4

Types of vocabulary: General, Specialized, Sub-technical
Fig.1.Performance in all types of vocabulary
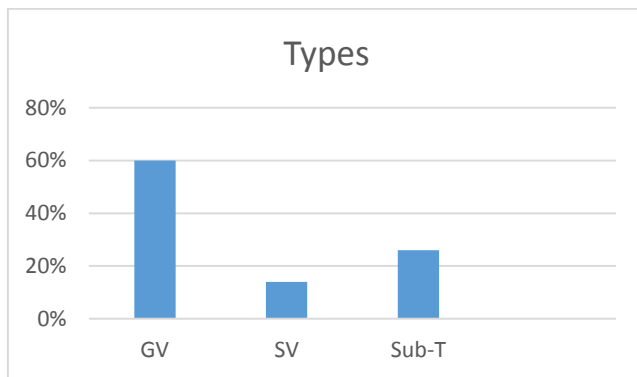
Source: ATAMENA, 2022, p.12

4. Results:

Foreign language learning involves vocabulary learning for the reason that vocabulary is one bottom line area. Conventionally, searching for convenient vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs) is a pivotal step in either EFL or ESP atmospheres. An important instructive ground that requires increased attention revolves around the religious vocabulary learning and teaching. This latter undergoes the same way as ESP or EFL vocabulary acquisition happens. The principle aims of this study are first to identify difficulties faced by Islamic Studies graduate students when they learn English vocabulary, then to draw up recommendations for further research. Providing answers to the current research questions is achieved through a quantitative-qualitative undertaking.

Results obtained from the online questionnaire whereby needed data was conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak. Analysis and interpretations of input are summarized in the following focal points:

--Participants' awareness of the different vocabulary learning stages was low, on that only 4.66% of graduate students's replies showed their consciousness of information processing.

--Vocabulary aspects that are commonly recognized by graduate IS students include translation (46.66 %) in the first place, polysemy (27.33%), synonymy (51.33) and affective meaning (30%). Perception of other vocabulary aspects was really inferior, conceptual meaning (1.33%), homonymy (2.66%), homophony (4%), style- register (3.33%), grammar of vocabulary (5.33%).

-- IS learners' dependence on incidental/ intentional learning indicated the vast reliance on intentional vocabulary learning (76%) rather than incidental (14%) or intentional together with incidental (10%).

-- IS participants' tendency towards discovery VLSs or Consolidation VLSs demonstrated various preferences; howbeit, major share was given to discovery VLSs with 74%.

--IS graduate students' inclinations towards the study of English vocabulary as a whole (religious, sub-technical, general) are positive but preparedness to tackle the experience is still underdeveloped.

--IS respondents' attitudes towards technologically-based vocabulary learning are positive. Mobile apps received high frequencies as compared to other software technologies.

In consolidation with the focus group interview comprising five teachers of English, findings came up with constructive views on vocabulary teaching and learning in Islamic Sciences faculties. The main outcomes are as follows:

-- The vocabulary learning in an English for Islamic Studies course is crucial and 40% of replies placed more emphasis on vocabulary rather than grammar in the first place, and there was an insistence on teaching religious vocabulary through reading specific religious texts.

-- Discussions emphasized on using explicit vocabulary teaching techniques by exposing students to different religious texts and intentionally help them construct glossaries of key terms. Contextualized and decontextualized vocabulary teaching and learning is adopted by most interviewees. Additionally, translation-directed teaching has been widely exploited by 80% of participants.

In compliance with Gairns and Redman (1986)'s work on teaching and learning vocabulary, the basic aspects of vocabulary to look for are pronunciation, spelling, grammar associated to vocabulary, meaning (appropriateness, denotation, connotations, idiomaticity), translation, collocations. Accordingly, IS participants experienced difficulties in pronunciation, spelling of English words, understanding major grammatical rules related to words and vocabulary, then properly express their ideas by choosing words suited to a specific context. To support this, Thornbury (2004) indicated common areas of difficulties to be pronunciation, spelling, grammar, meaning, and if learners find it hard to or fail in each aspect, it will be considered a learning problem.

Islamic graduate students still find it unmanageable to learn all the types of vocabulary with identical degrees. Therefore, specialized vocabulary retention had 21%, general vocabulary displayed 60%, and sub-technical vocabulary showed 93% (see figure 1 stated above). Accordingly, some words are complex while others tend to be easy to learn; thus, Surmanov and Azimova (2020) expressed that foreign language vocabulary is difficult to retain due to the huge amount of words to learn and memorize. All that is related to complicated mental processes the mind, memory are responsible for that intervene to successfully retain as numerous as possible of words. He clarified that rote learning of vocabulary might be pointless for learners because the absorption of words with definitions provided by dictionaries cannot help in recognizing the rules, understanding the links between and among items.

5. Conclusion:

Vocabulary is the keystone of language learning and it carries no weight whether or not the setting is for EFL. The process of decoding, storing, remembering and recalling words is complicated; thus, learners face difficulties when learn new words and essentially if they own poor vocabulary repertoire, it becomes hard to communicate effectively.

This investigation aimed at identifying English vocabulary difficulties experienced by Islamic Studies graduate students, then suggesting some useful evidence for further research. Data collected from the online questionnaire and teachers focus group interview were valuable and productive in the sense that answers to the research questions posed could be provided.

Students face difficulties in different areas of vocabulary learning. These problems related to pronunciation, spelling, grammar of vocabulary, meaning (appropriateness, mastery of using words with suitable contexts, understanding and using idiomatic expressions). The majority of students trusted in explicit, intentional vocabulary learning and they cared less about other vocabulary learning modalities or

synergy of all the modalities (both intentional and incidental).

Research in English vocabulary learning is yet immature and requires more consideration. Consequently, answering the research questions opens the doors for more questions since research goes through continuing growth. Therefore, the fundamental points worth investigating are:

--Which words should be taught first and what should be left in English for Islamic Studies Course?

--How should English vocabulary be taught in EIS environments?

--Which apps are convenient for vocabulary learning in IS contexts?

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8. Appendices.

Teachers' Interview

Question 1/ How long have you been teaching English ?
Question/ What do you teach in EIS course ?
Question 3/ How do you teach English vocabulary ?
Question 4/ Do you implement Technology in your teaching ?
Question 5/Which VLSs do you adopt in your teaching ?
Question 6/ What are the most common software apps you rely on ?
Question 7/How do you help students retain the maximum of vocabularies ?