INVESTIGATING VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES AFFECTING THE READING SKILLS OF ESL STUDENTS IN RAJAN PUR

1Dr Muhammad Akram 2 Asghar Ali Mazaari * 3 Muhammad Arslan*
Assistant Professor, Department of English, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Sub Campus Rahim Yar Khan, Punjab, Pakistan
MPhil Scholar, Department of English Linguistics, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Sub Campus Rahim Yar Khan, Punjab, Pakistan
MPhil Scholar, Department of English Linguistics, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Sub Campus Rahim Yar Khan, Punjab, Pakistan
*Corresponding Author: drasghar1984@gmail.com

ABSTRACT
This research examined the effect of vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) to discover the ability that the students of language read, second at average level in Rajan pur, Pakistan. The goal of this research is to research diplomas wherein different forms of VL enable the students to comprehend academic texts in English. A quantitative study design was conducted and data were gathered using a structured questionnaire administered among second-level English students. As can be seen from the findings in the table, the employment of cognitive, memory, and compensation strategies is highly correlated and is positively related to school performance. Enhanced comprehension results have been noted among students employing metacognitive strategies, demonstrating the importance they exercise as a consequence of self-witness and strategic planning in vocabulary. This research concluded that comprehension and possession of the whole language can be enhanced by English-speaking English students using a number of strategies for learning vocabulary. The findings are valuable inputs for teachers, research program planners and politicians in the formulation of effective vocabulary research.
KEYWORDS: strategies for learning vocabulary, reading comprehension, secondary education, ESL students, language acquisition, metacognitive strategies

Introduction

Dictionaries are a significant part of language learning, particularly for students of English as a second language. Without knowing sufficient words, they actually struggle with text understanding, express their thoughts and pass school. It is mainly the foundation of all language abilities - calculation, performance, reading, and writing. Reading is a huge connection to how many words you know and comprehend. We must actually examine how students can choose and employ new vocabulary through various techniques. In their English courses, students are usually confronted with academic writings abundant in words that they have no idea what can make them hard to comprehend and generally pass. To address this issue, students employ a wide range of techniques to learn vocabulary, whether knowingly or unknowingly. These strategies will assist you in learning, recalling and applying new words. When they apply these strategies appropriately, it can actually improve their reading and school. Yet, these methods have several significant things to the work. For instance, they know strategies, are motivated, receive proper exhibits, and effectively support education. Previous studies indicated that dictionary learning strategies are indeed effective in enhancing what has been read. Scholars like Schmidt and National have overcome dictionary learning strategies in five categories: memory, cognition, metacognition, society, and reward. Each of

these categories offers students various means to fight vocabulary in different ways. For instance, word relevance and mental images are memory strategies. However, a metacognitive approach is to design and adhere to training. Students can apply these strategies to actually improve their comprehension of the reading. This is particularly helpful for second language learners. But what is the question - few studies have actually looked at how vocabulary learning strategies influence readings comprehension among rural secondary students like Rajanpur, Pakistan.

The majority of the research is focused in urban and universities, and thus students from poorly maintained areas drop off from the discussion as a norm. It can truly benefit teachers and politics to understand how such students employ vocabulary strategies and how it impacts their comprehension. This research was targeted towards this specific research since vocabulary strategies impact reading capacity for ESL middle school children in Rajanpur. He wished to identify the most common methods used and how these were connected with measuring reading comprehension. This research, which has grown this specific group, aims to contribute to the best knowledge of ESL development in Pakistan. Thus, in the present research, we employed a set questionnaire to examine a group of students in the middle school closely. They are reading comprehension metrics based and specific vocabulary learning strategies. They employed descriptive statistics and constructed statistics to observe the extent to which the application of these strategies tied them to the manner in which students comprehend what they read. They took cues to the theory developed by Oxford and Schmidt, just 97 years old, in an effort to grasp their findings.

What they found is actually very useful in instructing English as a second language in Pakistani schools. Dictionary learning approaches are the most successful, so teachers can tailor their techniques to assist students more. And that's not all - program developers can combine textbooks and lesson strategic training to further ESL students' comprehension. Overall, this study has in fact added a need for more quality English education, particularly in poor rural communities.

Literature Review

In learning languages, one needs a dictionary. It greatly assists communication and comprehension. English-language if pupils lack a good dictionary, this can have an entire effect on how they engage in assessments and discussions. A 2001 Nation study indicates that vocabulary is highly significant in enhancing language. For ESL learners, a good grasp of the vocabulary is crucial to comprehend everything they learn and engage in the class. Moreover, if you know plenty of words, you will see that what you read is easier to comprehend. With the assistance of a strong dictionary, learners can actually find out and comprehend texts encountering knowledge. Learners can successfully interpret and decipher texts due to trusted vocabulary.

The dictionary is established as the strongest predictor of comprehension read by Anderson and Freebody (1981), citing that lack of vocabulary knowledge may sometimes discourage understanding despite good mastery of grammar. A resource of decoding and contextualizing tools for unfamiliar words, Vocabulary Learning Strategy (VLS), can enhance such understanding. There are two kinds of vocabulary. This, theoretically, is conducive and sensitive to students in regulating their receptive vocabulary beforehand.

Nation (2001) More vocabulary units of high frequency, technical and academic vocabulary. Academic and high-frequency dictionary skills are needed by ESL students in order to effectively read school textbooks. Based on Ciang's description, the presence of a deep and wide vocabulary, or the amount of words that an individual is familiar with, and how much he comprehends, will assist you in understanding difficult materials better. Students apply

deliberate strategies to acquire vocabulary or VLS, memorize and derive vocabulary. Based on Schmitt (1997), VL can combine knowledge and segment it into value-seeking strategies. Strategies of integration involve reorganization, imagery, and repetition, while the utilization of mysterious contexts and dictionary are among detection strategies. Learners are able to acquire new words and become independent in the learning process with the application of numerous different strategies.

Definition Strategy - Students for meaning independent results, including affixes, root analysis, dictionary use. Oxford (1990) defines social strategies as communicating with other people, such as seeking to get meaning of words explained by classmates and teachers in order to gain better understanding through joint effort. Memory strategies incorporating pictures and relevances can contribute to long-term memory, but cognitive strategies incorporate mechanical training in the form of memo descriptions and card usage.

These strategies, according to Schmidt (1997), were especially helpful in early dictionary acquisitions. Metacognitive strategies encompass planning, monitoring and evaluation of learning in vocabulary. To Anderson (2002), these higher-order strategies are linked with enhanced motivation in students and foster self-regulated learning. These approaches mesh with memory and cognitive strategies to enhance comprehension of what is read and retained in an ordered learning environment VL heavily influences reading academic capacity, particularly while utilizing texts involving low frequencies or unique vocabulary. Students who employed diverse VLS functioned effectively to comprehend the test, as per Gu and Johnson (1996).

Vocabulary knowledge underlies reading models, whether top to bottom to bottom (predicting meaning) or interactive (combining prior knowledge) (2009). In addition, the activation of basic knowledge by dictionaries in enhancing interpretation is highlighted within diagram theory (Carrell, 1983). Dictionaries may be learned accidentally through reading, listening, or deliberately exposing systematic approaches such as vocabulary lists. Hulstijn (2001) suggested striking a balance between the two methods for the best training. In accordance with Krashen (1989), close reading results in constant repetitions in words across different contexts that aid in the learning of vocabulary and long-term memory. As ESL students now have access to electronic tools like mobile apps, games, and online scores, multimodal vocabulary learning is now attainable through the newer technology. Godwin-Jones explained that digital tools' utilization in ESL classrooms can actually boost the motivation and engagement of students. These tools blend with various kinds of input, such as sounds and visual effects that can be beneficial for all learning styles.

Thus, students retain and apply vocabulary to real-life experiences. But ESL students actually went to the road. For instance, there was not sufficient support in the class, and I did not listen to English outside school. Laufer highlighted that students tend to struggle with abstract dictionaries and put words into their heads. Teachers play a very crucial role when they teach dictionary training methods. Cohen and Weaver highlighted that with the instruction of this strategy, students will become effective and become more autonomous students. In addition, GU and Schmidt's research substantiates the claim that the application of these strategies is associated with the best understanding of what has been read.

Research Objective

To investigate the influence of vocabulary learning strategies on the reading comprehension abilities of ESL learners in Rajan Pur

Research Question

How do vocabulary learning strategies impact the reading comprehension skills of ESL learners in Rajan Pur?

Methodology

Design

This study employed a quantitative research design using a descriptive survey method to examine the role of vocabulary learning strategies in ESL

Learners' reading comprehension at the secondary school level. The survey method was chosen to collect standard data from a large sample, making it possible to apply the findings to the entire population. The design was appropriate for identifying patterns in strategy usage and their relationship with reading comprehension performance.

Population

Secondary school ESL students enrolled in government schools in Rajanpur District made up the study's target population. These students were chosen because they represent a key group encountering challenges in English language acquisition, particularly in reading comprehension and vocabulary development. Due to the population's ongoing exposure to English as a second language in an academic setting, it was decided that they would be a good candidate for examining the influence of vocabulary strategies. Sample and Sampling Technique

A total of 200 students were selected using stratified random sampling. This method represented gender, type of school, and academic performance level. Stratified sampling was employed to reduce sampling bias and to better reflect the diversity within the target population. Prior to random selection within each stratum, participants were divided into subgroups (strata) based on gender and academic track.

Research Instrument

The primary instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire. It was designed to gather data on students' use of vocabulary learning strategies and their reading comprehension abilities. The demographic information section of the questionnaire was followed by a section on strategy application and comprehension. The items were constructed using a 5- point Likert scale ranging from 'Strongly Agree' to 'Strongly Disagree'.

Validity and Reliability

The questionnaire was reviewed by three applied linguistics specialists to guarantee its content validity. Based on their suggestions, changes were made to make the text clearer and more in line with the goals of the research. A pilot study with 30 students who were not part of the final sample was used to determine the instrument's reliability. Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the questionnaire was 0.82, indicating high internal consistency.

Method for Collecting the Data were collected over a two-week period during regular school hours, with permission from school administrators and informed consent from participants. Participants were briefed about the purpose of the study and assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. The investigator administered the questionnaire in person to ensure consistency and to clarify any ambiguities.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data were analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Descriptive statistics such as means, frequencies, and percentages were calculated to summarize the data.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical guidelines by obtaining informed consent from all participants and securing permission from relevant school authorities. Participants were informed that their involvement was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any stage without penalty. Confidentiality of data was maintained throughout the study, and all collected information was used solely for research purpose.

Literature review

4.7 I ask my teacher or peers for help with new vocabulary words.

	quency	cent	id Percent	ulative Percent
E	84	42.0	42.0	42.0
NGLY AGREE	43	21.5	21.5	63.5
RAL	39	19.5	19.5	83.0
GREE	22	11.0	11.0	94.0
NGLY DISAGREE	12	6.0	6.0	100.0
	200	100.0	100.0	

I ask my teacher or peers for help with new vocabulary words.
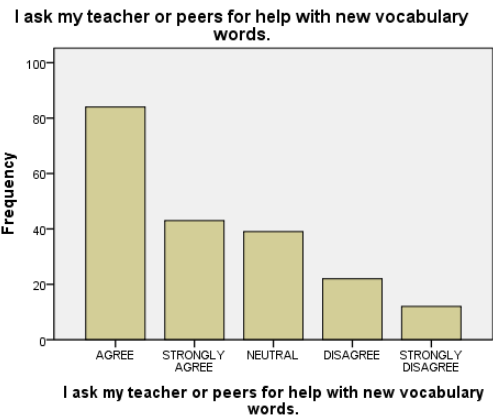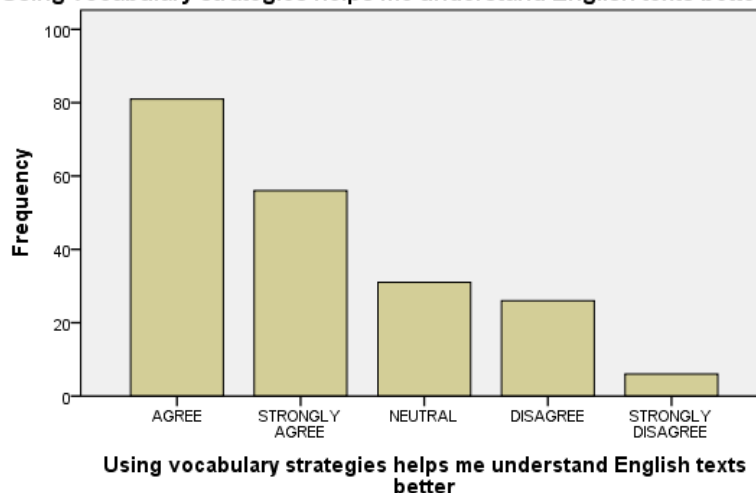
ient		DA
ny teacher or peers for ith new vocabulary		

The table summarizes responses to the statement, "I ask my teacher or peers for help with new vocabulary words." A combined 63.5% of participants either **strongly agree** (21.5%) or **agree** (42%), indicating that seeking help from teachers or peers is a widely used and trusted strategy for learning new vocabulary. However, 19.5% remain **neutral**, while 17% **disagree** (11%) or **strongly disagree** (6%), suggesting that a smaller portion of respondents may prefer independent learning or feel less comfortable seeking assistance. Overall, the data highlights that asking for help is a common and effective approach, though not universally adopted by all.

4.8 Using vocabulary strategies helps me understand English texts better

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
AGREE	81	40.5	40.5	40.5
STRONGLY AGREE	56	28.0	28.0	68.5
NEUTRAL	31	15.5	15.5	84.0
DISAGREE	26	13.0	13.0	97.0
STRONGLY DISAGREE	6	3.0	3.0	100.0
	200	100.0	100.0	

Using vocabulary strategies helps me understand English texts better

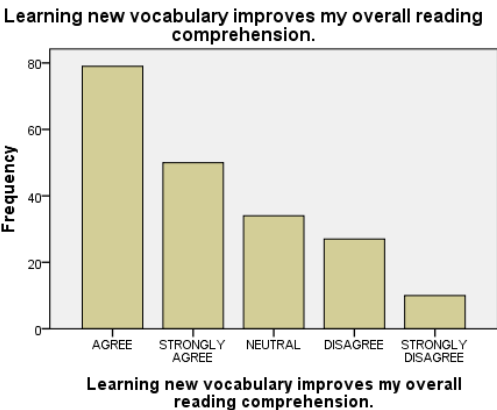| nent		DA
vocabulary strategies me understand English etter.		

A recent survey assessed participants' perceptions of the statement: "Using vocabulary strategies helps me understand English texts better." The results indicated that 68.5% of respondents affirmed this belief, with 28% strongly agreeing and 40.5% agreeing. Meanwhile, 15.5% remained neutral, and 16% expressed disagreement, comprising 13% who disagreed and 3% who strongly disagreed. These findings suggest that a significant majority of participants recognize the effectiveness of vocabulary strategies in enhancing comprehension of English texts, though a minority remains uncertain or unconvinced of their benefits.

Tale 4.9 Learning new vocabulary improves my overall reading comprehension.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
AGREE	79	39.5	39.5	39.5
STRONGLY AGREE	50	25.0	25.0	64.5

RAL	34	17.0	17.0	81.5
GREE	27	13.5	13.5	95.0
NGLY DISAGREE	10	5.0	5.0	100.0
	200	100.0	100.0	

Learning new vocabulary improves my overall reading comprehension.

nent		DA
ng new vocabulary ves my overall reading ehension.		

The table summarizes responses to the statement, "Learning new vocabulary improves my overall reading comprehension." A combined 64.5% of participants either strongly agree (25%) or agree (39.5%), indicating that the majority believe expanding their vocabulary significantly enhances their ability to understand texts. However, 17% remain neutral, while 18.5% disagree (13.5%) or strongly disagree (5%), suggesting that a smaller portion of respondents may not see a strong connection between vocabulary learning and reading comprehension or may rely on other skills. Overall, the data highlights that most participants view vocabulary acquisition as a key factor in improving reading comprehension, though not everyone shares this perspective.
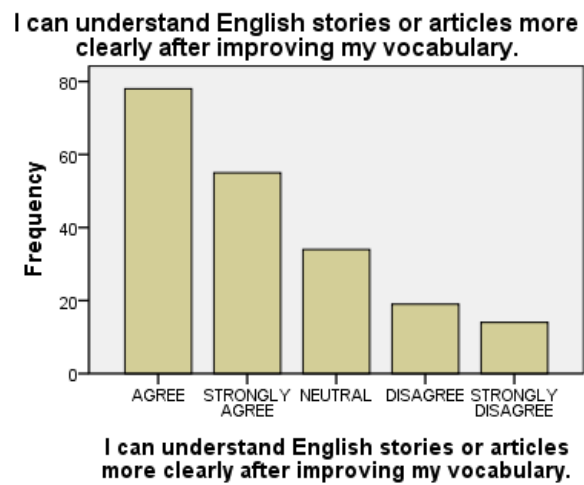
4.10 Vocabulary learning strategies make it easier for me to summarize what I read.				
	quency	cent	id Percent	nulative Percent
E	73	36.5	36.5	36.5
NGLY AGREE	57	28.5	28.5	65.0
RAL	40	20.0	20.0	85.0
GREE	19	9.5	9.5	94.5
NGLY DISAGREE	11	5.5	5.5	100.0
	200	100.0	100.0	
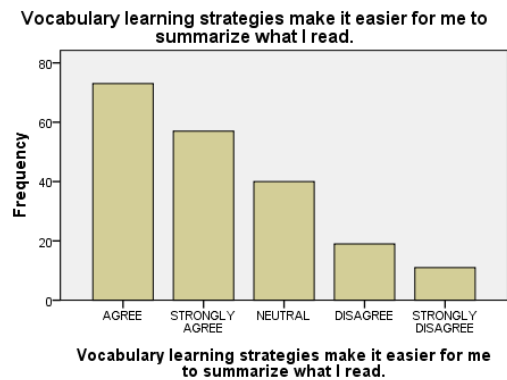
Vocabulary learning strategies make it easier for me to summarize what I read.

ient	DA
ılary learning strategies it easier for me to arize what I read.	

The table summarizes responses to the statement, "Vocabulary learning strategies make it easier for me to summarize what I read." A combined 65% of participants either strongly agree (28.5%) or agree (36.5%), indicating that the majority find vocabulary strategies highly effective for improving their ability to summarize texts. However, 20% remain neutral, while 15% disagree (9.5%) or strongly disagree (5.5%), suggesting that a smaller portion of respondents may not find these strategies as helpful or may rely on other methods for summarization. Overall, the data shows that vocabulary learning strategies are widely regarded as beneficial for summarizing reading materials, though not universally effective for everyone

4.11 I can understand English stories or articles more clearly after improving my ılary.

	quency	cent	id Percent	nulative Percent
:E	78	39.0	39.0	39.0
NGLY AGREE	55	27.5	27.5	66.5
RAL	34	17.0	17.0	83.5
JREE	19	9.5	9.5	93.0
NGLY DISAGREE	14	7.0	7.0	100.0
	200	100.0	100.0	

I can understand English stories or articles more clearly after improving my vocabulary.

| ient	DA
understand English stories cles more clearly after ving my vocabulary.	

The table summarizes responses to the statement, "I can understand English stories or Articles more clearly after improving my vocabulary." A combined 66.5% of participants either strongly agree (27.5%) or agree (39%), indicating that the majority believe enhancing their vocabulary significantly improves their ability to comprehend English texts. However, 17% remain neutral, while 16.5% disagree (9.5%) or strongly disagree (7%), suggesting that a smaller portion of respondents may not see a strong link between vocabulary improvement and clearer understanding or may rely on other skills for comprehension. Overall, the data highlights that most participants view vocabulary development as a key factor in better understanding English stories and articles, though not everyone shares this perspective.

Table 4.12 Vocabulary learning helps me guess the meaning of unknown words while reading.

	quency	cent	id Percent	nulative Percent
E	79	39.5	39.5	39.5
NGLY AGREE	58	29.0	29.0	68.5
RAL	32	16.0	16.0	84.5
GREE	25	12.5	12.5	97.0
NGLY DISAGREE	6	3.0	3.0	100.0
	200	100.0	100.0	

Vocabulary learning helps me guess the meaning of unknown words while reading.

ient		DA
ulary learning helps me the meaning of unknown while reading.		
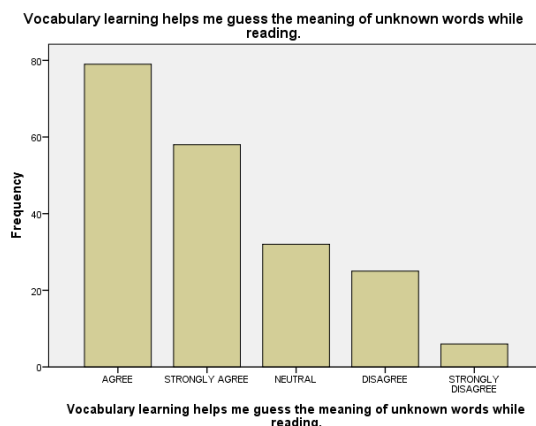
The table summarizes responses to the statement, "Vocabulary learning helps me guess the meaning of unknown words while reading." A combined 68.5% of participants either strongly agree (29%) or agree (39.5%), showing that most find vocabulary learning effective for inferring word meanings. However, 17% remain neutral, while 15.5% disagree (12.5%) or strongly disagree (3%), indicating some resistance or lack of reliance on this strategy. Overall, vocabulary learning is widely seen as a helpful tool for understanding unfamiliar words, though not universally adopted.

Conclusion

This study reveals the significant contribution of vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) renewal to enhancing the capacity to comprehend ESL students at the average level. It was evident that students applying a specific number of strategies, including the use of dictionary use, contextual hypotheses, mental association creation, and keeping vocabulary records, yielded the highest comprehension skills. The employment of cognitive and metacognitive strategies is part of what enables students to cope with and comprehend challenging texts. This means vocabulary strategic instruction in vocabulary is in direct correlation with performance at school.

Evidence indicates that when students frequently use the definition of reflex strategies, they did not employ metacognitive plans. This indicates a slight gap in how much they do or how much they taught for extensive training in the dictionary. If we are able to expand the usage of metacognitive strategies, like planning, monitoring its progress, and evaluating research methods, it will actually assist us in better comprehension of what we read. Overall, this research stresses that providing students with great vocabulary strategies is very crucial to language development and school achievement.

Recommendations

So this is the problem. ESL teachers ought to start applying real dictionary teaching techniques in class. Student training, how to find things, memories of new words, their calls for training make them encounter tough words. Teachers also suggest building friendly events like discussions, games, and team work. You can provide new words to students. And

we do so, but those who are responsible for creating training programs and creating creative educational policies should design the educational component of English classes for older students. Seminars, language laboratories, and even apps can actually assist with deliberate training of the dictionary, or just do it on the side. Oh, and we cannot fail to notice how many students are worth knowing. If you can figure out a way to construct goals, track success and harvest words, you will eventually be more autonomous strategic reading.

References

Anderson, N. J. (2002). *The role of metacognition in second language teaching and learning*. ERIC Digest.

Anderson, R. C., & Freebody, P. (1981). Vocabulary knowledge. In J. T. Guthrie (Ed.), *Comprehension and teaching: Research reviews* (pp. 77–117). International Reading Association.

Carrell, P. L. (1983). Some issues in studying the role of schemata, or background knowledge, in second language comprehension. *Reading in a Foreign Language, 1*(2), 81–92.

Cohen, A. D., & Weaver, S. J. (2005). *Styles and strategies-based instruction: A teachers' guide*. University of Minnesota.

Godwin-Jones, R. (2010). Emerging technologies: Mobile apps for language learning. *Language Learning & Technology, 14*(2), 2–11.

Grabe, W. (2009). *Reading in a second language: Moving from theory to practice*. Cambridge University Press.

GU, Y. (2003). Vocabulary learning in a second language: Person, task, context and strategies. *TESL-EJ, 7*(2), 1–25.

GU, Y., & Johnson, R. K. (1996). Vocabulary learning strategies and language learning outcomes. *Language Learning, 46*(4), 643–679.

Hulstijn, J. H. (2001). Intentional and incidental second-language vocabulary learning: A reappraisal of elaboration, rehearsal and automaticity. In P. Robinson (Ed.), *Cognition and second language instruction* (pp. 258–286). Cambridge University Press.

Krashen, S. D. (1989). *We acquire vocabulary and spelling by reading: Additional evidence for the input hypothesis*. The Modern Language Journal, 73(4), 440–464. Laufer, B. (1998). The development of passive and active vocabulary in a second language: Same or different? *Applied Linguistics, 19*(2), 255–271.

Nation, I. S. P. (2001). *Learning vocabulary in another language*. Cambridge University Press.

Oxford, R. L. (1990). *Language learning strategies: What every teacher should know*. Newbury House Publishers.

Qian, D. D. (2002). Investigating the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and academic reading performance: An assessment perspective. *Language Learning, 52*(3), 513–536.

Schmitt, N. (1997). Vocabulary learning strategies. In N. Schmitt & M. McCarthy (Eds.), *Vocabulary: Description, acquisition and pedagogy* (pp. 199–227). Cambridge University Press.