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> **Challenges in Teaching English Vocabulary to Third-Year Primary School Pupils**

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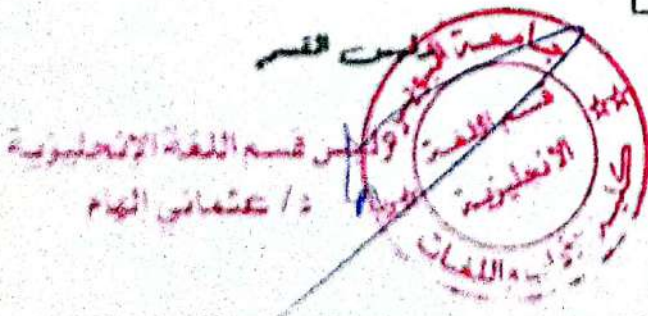
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Challenges in TeachingEnglish Vocabulary to Third-Year Primary School Pupils

A Case Study of Arroudj Mohamed Primary School in Dirah-Bouira

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A Thesis Submitted to the Department of English Language and Literature – University of Bouira – in Partial Fulfillment for the Requirement of Master's Degree in Didactics and Applied Languages

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DEDICATION

    To my dearest parents, for their boundless sacrifices, unwavering belief in my potential, and the wisdom that has guided my pursuit of knowledge. To my devoted spouse, whose constant patience, understanding and faith in my abilities.

To my cherished children, **Nour El Kamar** and **Amir**, whose joyful spirits have reminded me of life's greater purpose throughout this journey - may you always find inspiration in learning as you have inspired me.

Mourad Khennouchi

    To my beloved parents, whose unwavering support and prayers have been the foundation of my journey. To my siblings, my lifelong companions and strength.

To the light of our home, my little sister **Maria**, whose smile brightens my days.

I also dedicate this work to the soul of my dear aunt, who remains forever in my heart and prayers. May ALLAH grant her eternal peace.

Zahra Ladek

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ABSTRACT

Teaching vocabulary is a crucial component of language learning, especially for young learners. Vocabulary knowledge significantly contributes to both comprehension and expression in the target language. However, many third-year primary school pupils struggle to build a rich vocabulary, which limits their ability to communicate and understand effectively. This dissertation investigates the challenges faced in teaching English vocabulary to third-year pupils at Arrouj Mohamed Primary School located in Dirah, Bouira. It also explores how vocabulary instruction can be improved to enhance learning outcomes. The study involved 32 third-year pupils and 8 different primary school English teachers annexed to Dirah. Data were collected through two tools: structured questionnaires and classroom observations. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, while classroom data were analysed thematically. The study underscores the importance of selecting engaging and level-appropriate materials such as picture books, songs, games, and multimedia resources that actively involve pupils in the learning process. The Findings suggest that the effective use of these resources can boost pupils' motivation and vocabulary retention. A key challenge for teachers is to create a classroom environment where vocabulary learning is meaningful, enjoyable, and responsive to learners' developmental and linguistic needs. The research highlights the vital role of teaching strategies in overcoming classroom constraints and emphasises the need for continuous exposure to vocabulary in varied and authentic contexts. The presented insights support the implementation of a more learner-centred and engaging approach to vocabulary teaching. By identifying instructional obstacles and proposing practical strategies, this study aims to help teachers foster stronger vocabulary development among third-year primary pupils, thus laying a solid foundation for their future success in English language learning.

Keywords: English vocabulary, Primary pupils, Teaching challenges Teaching strategies, Vocabulary learning,

ملخص

يُعدّ تعليم المفردات عنصرًا أساسيًا في تعلم اللغة، خاصةً لدى المتعلمين الصغار. إذ تسهم المعرفة بالمفردات بشكل كبير في تعزيز الفهم والتعبير في اللغة المستهدفة. ومع ذلك، يواجه العديد من تلاميذ السنة الثالثة من المرحلة الابتدائية صعوبات في بناء مخزون لغوي غني، مما يحد من قدرتهم على التواصل والفهم بشكل فعال. وتركّز هذه المذكّرة على تحديّات تلقين المفردات الإنجليزية لتلاميذ السنة الثالثة بمدرسة عروج محمد الابتدائية، الواقعة في ديرة، ولاية البويرة .كما تستكشف سبل تحسين التدريس لتعزيز النتائج التعليمية. شملت الدراسة 32 تلميذًا من السنة الثالثة ابتدائي و8 أساتذة للغة الإنجليزية من مدارس ابتدائية مختلفة تابعة لديرة. تم جمع البيانات باستخدام أداتين: استبيانات منظمة وملاحظات صفية. وقد تم تحليل البيانات الكمية باستخدام الإحصاء الوصفي، بينما خضعت البيانات الصفية للتحليل الموضوعاتي. وتؤكد الدراسة على أهمية اختيار مواد جذابة ومناسبة للمستوى – مثل الكتب المدعّمة بالرسومات التوضيحية، والأغاني، والألعاب، والوسائط المتعددة – التي تُشرك التلاميذ بشكل فعّال في عملية التعلم. وتشير النتائج إلى أن الاستخدام الأمثل لهذه الموارد يعزز دافعية التلاميذ واستبقاء المفردات. ويتمثل التحدي الرئيسي للمعلمين في توفير بيئة داخل القِسم يكون فيها تعلم المفردات ذا معنى، ممتعًا، ومستجيبًا للاحتياجات النمائية واللغوية للمتعلمين. ويسلط البحث الضوء على الدور الحيوي للاستراتيجيات التعليمية في التغلب على قيود الأقسام الدراسية، مع التأكيد على ضرورة التعرّض المستمر للمفردات في سياقات متنوعة وأصيلة. وتدعم هذه الرؤى تنفيذ نهج أكثر تركيزًا على المتعلم وإشراكًا له في تدريس المفردات. ومن خلال تحديد العقبات التعليمية واقتراح استراتيجيات عملية، تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى مساعدة المعلمين على تعزيز تنمية المفردات لدى تلاميذ السنة الثالثة ابتدائي، مما يضع أساسًا متينًا لنجاحهم المستقبلي في تعلّم اللغة الإنجليزية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: مفردات اللغة الإنجليزية، تلاميذ المدرسة الابتدائية، تحديات التدريس، استراتيجيات التدريس، تعلم المفردات.

List of Abbreviations

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

ICT: Information and Communication Technology

L1: First Language (native language)

SCT: Sociocultural Theory

ZPD: Zone of Proximal Development

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General Introduction

General Introduction

Learning a foreign language is not limited to memorising vocabulary and applying grammar rules, but rather requires a high level of ability and proficiency in skills to use them in realistic communication situations, in addition to understanding the reality of the culture associated with it. This helps the learner expand his / her horizons and perspectives on the world.

Vocabulary is considered the basic foundation of linguistic development, as it contributes effectively to enhancing listening and oral comprehension abilities, as well as writing and reading. Without sufficient vocabulary, it is difficult for learners to comprehend linguistic input and produce meaningful expressions. This is especially important for learners at the primary level, as learning vocabulary is a key factor in establishing a strong linguistic structure. Third-year primary school pupils face various difficulties in learning and retaining new vocabulary. This poses a challenge at several levels, as it requires mental effort to understand the meaning and relies on effective educational curricula to consolidate it.

However, some linguistic and pedagogical factors may hinder the process. Pronunciation difficulties are primarily caused by the phonetic differences between English and the pupils' native language, which often leads to confusion between similar-sounding words such as bed and bad. The irregularity of English spelling is an additional obstacle, making it difficult for learners to visually recognise words. Furthermore, memory problems negatively impact Pupils' ability to retrieve and effectively use new vocabulary. These challenges are worsened by their limited exposure to the language outside of the classroom, as opportunities for vocabulary consolidation are limited, negatively impacting their general language development.

Since vocabulary is an important part of language learning, and because of the difficulties children face in this area, this study aims to identify the problems faced by third-year primary school pupils in learning vocabulary. It also seeks to understand the teaching methods used in Algerian classrooms, in order to determine the causes of these difficulties, and to study the current methods used in teaching vocabulary.

Yet, this study is not a pioneer to explore the challenges of vocabulary learning; previous studies have addressed the topic. For instance, Abbassi and Hakime (2020) explored the main challenges and requirements of introducing English as a second language in Algerian primary schools, focusing on the context of Guelma. Sahraoui (2023) investigated the difficulties faced by third-year pupils in learning English vocabulary in Biskra, particularly issues related to pronunciation and retention. On their part, Sennagh and Sibachir (2023) examined both teachers' challenges and pupils' difficulties in primary schools in Tiaret.

Therefore, we have not chosen this topic randomly: Firstly, young learners in primary school are still developing their cognitive and linguistic skills, making vocabulary acquisition difficult. Secondly, in primary school, pupils study both French and English at once, which leads to linguistic interference and an inability to distinguish vocabulary between the two new foreign languages, though French, for some Algerian families, is still spoken at home

1. Statement of the Problem

In Algeria, English has begun to be taught as a foreign language to children at an early stage of education. Third-grade pupils are required to learn simple English words and use them to build basic language skills. However, learning vocabulary is not easy, as it is influenced by many linguistic and educational factors, making it difficult for children to build a strong vocabulary.

There are several reasons for these difficulties, such as pupils' lack of exposure to English outside of school, difficulty learning new words, and sometimes teaching methods that do not suit pupils' needs. Some learners struggle with pronouncing words or remembering and using them correctly. Although rote memorisation is common, teaching methods that rely on play and interaction may be more helpful, but they require further study. Therefore, it is important to study the difficulties third-grade pupils face in learning vocabulary and understand the teaching methods currently used so that we can improve their teaching and enhance learning.

2. Research Questions

This study is based on the following main question: Do third-year primary school pupils acquire English vocabulary easily?

We aim at answering the following sub-questions:

1. What difficulties do third-grade pupils face when learning English vocabulary?
2. Do pupils have difficulties in memorizing words,when they are not exposed to English outside the classroom?
3. Are old teaching methods appropriate for pupils' vocabulary learning needs?
4. What methods do teachers currently adopt in teaching children vocabulary?

3. Research Hypotheses

This study poses the following hypotheses, based on vocabulary learning problems of third-year pupils:

H1: pupils face difficulties in learning English words due to problems with pronunciation, writing, and memory.

H2: When pupils are not exposed to English outside of the classroom, they have difficulty memorising words.

H3: Old teaching methods, such as memorisation alone, are less effective than interactive methods that rely on situations and context.

H4: The alignment between current vocabulary teaching methods and pupils' learning needs plays a crucial role in their vocabulary acquisition success.

These hypotheses will be tested through data collection and analysis to determine their validity and explore effective strategies for improving vocabulary instruction in Algerian primary schools.

4.   Research Methodology

Selecting an appropriate research methodology is crucial for ensuring the validity and reliability of the study's findings. Given the descriptive-exploratory nature of this research, a mixed-methods approach has been adopted to provide a comprehensive examination of the difficulties encountered by third-year primary school pupils in learning English vocabulary. To collect relevant data, the study employs three primary instruments:

- **Teacher Questionnaire:** A structured questionnaire distributed to English teachers in primary schools to gain insights into the challenges faced by pupils, the strategies currently employed in vocabulary instruction, and the perceived effectiveness of various teaching methods.

- **Pupil Questionnaire:** A simplified, age-appropriate questionnaire designed for third-year pupils to assess their attitudes towards vocabulary learning, the difficulties they encounter, and their engagement with different instructional activities.

- **Classroom Observations:** Observations conducted to examine real-life vocabulary teaching practices, focusing on methods used by teachers, pupils' responses and engagement levels, and the effectiveness of techniques such as visual aids, repetition and interactive activities.

By integrating quantitative data (from structured questionnaires) and qualitative insights (from open-ended responses and observations), this study provides a well-rounded analysis of vocabulary instruction challenges.

5. Structure of the Research

This dissertation is structured into three main chapters:

- **Chapter One:** Provides a theoretical overview of vocabulary acquisition, emphasising its significance in language learning, the cognitive processes involved, and the challenges encountered by young learners.
- **Chapter Two:** Details the research methodology, including data collection instruments, participant selection, and the analytical framework.
- **Chapter Three:** Presents the research findings, examining the identified challenges and analysing instructional strategies employed in primary education.

By shedding light on these challenges, this study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of vocabulary instruction in Algerian primary schools, ultimately supporting a more engaging and effective English learning experience for young learners. In addition to these chapters, this dissertation includes a general introduction and a general conclusion. The latter is followed by a list of references and appendices.

Theoretical Part

Chapter one

Vocabulary Acquisition in

Third-Year Primary Education

Chapter one: Vocabulary acquisition in third- year primary school

Introduction

Education is the process of promoting learning and gaining values, habits, abilities, and knowledge, usually through instruction, training, or study. In Algeria, learning English has grown in importance as part of contemporary education. Beginning in the third year of primary school, English is introduced as a subject with an emphasis on helping pupils develop communication skills that will help them in their academic and future endeavours.

Vocabulary mastery is especially important since it forms the basis of successful communication in and outside of the classroom. Teaching language to young pupils, however, comes with its own set of difficulties. Learning new words requires more than just memorisation; it also entails comprehending their definitions, applications, and relationships to other words. Teaching methods that take into account the cognitive and psychological growth phases of primary school pupils are necessary for this process. Modifying these methods to pupils' needs helps improve the learning process.

This chapter provides an overview of vocabulary acquisition in third-year primary education. It introduces the role of vocabulary in language learning, including its definition, types, and importance across the four language skills. It also examines the requirements of third-year primary pupils, such as their developmental stages, learning styles, and challenges. Various traditional and modern teaching methods are reviewed, along with the importance of context in vocabulary instruction. The chapter further explores the challenges encountered in vocabulary teaching, the internal and external factors that affect vocabulary learning, and presents the key theories that support vocabulary instruction.

The chapter is structured as follows:

1.1. Vocabulary in Language Learning – introduces the concept of vocabulary, its types (receptive and productive), and its importance in listening, reading, speaking, and writing.

1.2. Vocabulary Needs of Young Learners – A Focus on 3rd-Year Primary Pupils

1.3. Methods of Teaching Vocabulary – reviews traditional and modern teaching methods, with a focus on contextual learning.

1.4. Challenges in Teaching Vocabulary – outlines the difficulties faced by both pupils and teachers.

1.5. Factors Affecting Vocabulary Learning – discusses internal and external factors that influence vocabulary acquisition.

1.6. Theories Supporting Vocabulary Instruction – presents behavioural, cognitive, and sociocultural theories relevant to vocabulary teaching.

1.1. Vocabulary in Language Learning

Expanding vocabulary is very important when learning any language. Vocabulary aids communication and comprehension. The more vocabulary pupils have, the better they will be able to express themselves and understand others.

1.1.1. Definition of Vocabulary

Vocabulary is the collection of words that people need to understand and use to communicate in a language. It is not just about memorising words; it also involves knowing how to pronounce them, their meanings, and how to use them correctly in different situations. Dictionary definitions show how important vocabulary is in learning a language. For example, Merriam-Webster (n.d.) defines vocabulary as "*the stock of words used by or known to a particular people or group of persons.*" In a similar manner, the Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.) describes it as "*all the words known and used by a particular person*" and "*all the words that exist in a particular language or subject.*"

The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (n.d.) gives a similar definition, stating that vocabulary includes "*all the words used by a particular person, or all the words that exist in a particular language or subject.*"

Besides dictionary definitions, some researchers have also described vocabulary. For instance, Ur (1996, p.60) defines vocabulary as "*the words we teach in a foreign language, which include not only meaning but also pronunciation and use in context.*"McCarthy (1990, p.5): "*Vocabulary is the words of a language, including single items and phrases or chunks of several words which convey a particular meaning.*"

A key element of language learning is vocabulary, which serves as the basis for critical abilities including speaking, writing, listening, and reading. Learners may find it difficult to communicate completely, understand others, and convey their views if they lack astrong vocabulary. Thus, expanding one's vocabulary is essential to being proficient in the language since it improves comprehension and allows one to utilize the language more practically in everyday contexts.

1.1.2. Types of Vocabulary

Vocabulary is divided into receptive (words recognised in reading and listening) and productive (words utilised in speaking and writing) categories.

According to Nation (2001, pp. 24–28). Receptive and productive vocabulary are distinguished by Nation (2001, pp. 24–28), who highlights that pupils frequently comprehend more words than they can actively employ.

1.1.2.1. Receptive Vocabulary

This type includes words that people are able to identify and comprehend when they read or hear them. Although the pupil may not actively utilise these words in writing or conversation, comprehension requires them. More receptive vocabulary allows learners to follow conversations, comprehend more materials, and understand what is being written or said.

Receptive vocabulary comprises terms that pupils can comprehend when they come across them in context, but they might not be able to use on their own in conversation (Nation, 2001, p. 93). Developing receptive vocabulary is frequently the first stage of language learning since it exposes students to new terms and broadens their vocabulary.

1.1.2.2. Productive Vocabulary

Productive vocabulary refers to words that pupils canactively utilise in their own speech and writing. These are terms that pupils can not only recognise but also correctly use in their own linguistic output. Nation (2001, p. 93) argues that productive vocabulary is essential for good communication because it allows pupils to express themselves clearly and smoothly.

Productive vocabulary is typically smaller than receptive vocabulary because it takes more effort and confidence to use words correctly in various circumstances. Developing a strong productive vocabulary is essential for pupils to transmit their thoughts, ideas, and emotions in a precise and organized manner.

1.1.3. Importance of Vocabulary

Vocabulary is essential in developing the four primary language abilities, each of which contributes to overall language competency.

1.1.3.1. Listening

Listening comprehension depends on a pupil's ability to recognise and understand words and phrases as they are spoken. A bigger vocabulary makes it easier and faster for listeners to identify words in spoken language, allowing them to better follow discussions or lectures.

e.g.,

If a pupil does not grasp a key term in a teacher's explanation, he / she may miss the entire lesson. However, if the learner has already met that word or is familiar with its meaning, he / she

will be able toassimilate the knowledge more effectively. It can be inferred that without a strong vocabulary, listening might be difficult since the listener may frequently pause to determine the meaning of unknown terms.

1.1.3.2. Reading

A large vocabulary is necessary for reading comprehension. When a learner encounters unfamiliar words in a text, it can impede his / her comprehension of the story or information. On the other hand, if a pupil learns a variety of words, he / she can quickly deduce the meaning of unfamiliar words using context clues, resulting in improved overall comprehension.

e.g.,

A pupil reading a novel may discover the phrase "melancholy." If he / she understands what it means, he / she will have a better understanding of a scene's mood or tone. However, if the pupil is unfamiliar with the word, he / she may miss the passage's emotional meaning. Thus, it may be deduced that pupils who lack a large vocabulary may fail to properly comprehend what they are reading, particularly in academic or more advanced books.

1.1.3.3. Speaking

In order to communicate effectively, a pupil must explain his / her views clearly. Knowing more words helps a person communicate the ideas more effectively. A wide-ranging vocabulary helps pick the right words and avoid unclear expressions, making the speech stronger. For example, a pupil with many words might say, "*I felt nervous speaking in front of the class*" instead of just "*I was nervous.*" This helps others understand better. When a pupil has fewer words, it is harder to explain his / her thoughts, which can cause confusion.

e.g.,

If a pupil has a strong vocabulary, he/she can say, "*I felt overwhelmed by the situation*" instead of using a less precise term like "*I felt bad.*" This gives the listener a clearer idea of how he/she was feeling. This demonstrates that a limited vocabulary can make it harder for the learner to express complex ideas, leading to frustration or miscommunication.

1.1.3.4. Writing

When writing, a big vocabulary helps pupils describe things and tell stories more clearly. The more words they know, the better they can choose the right ones.

e.g.,

In a story, a pupil might say "*gloomy*" instead of "*dark*" to describe a room with low light and a sad atmosphere. It gives a clearer picture of what this pupil means. This provides depth and

clarity to his / her work. This suggests that writing can feel constrained or repetitive without a diverse vocabulary, since a pupil may resort to utilising the same words over and over, weakening his / her argument or the impact of the work. Richards (2000, pp. 40-60) found that a limited vocabulary can impede students' advancement in other language abilities.

1.2. Vocabulary Needs of Young Learners

Pupils aged 8 to 9 years have unique cognitive and psychosocial needs that influence their learning.

1.2.1. Cognitive and Psychological Development

Piaget (1977, p. 15) suggests that pupils at this age range are in the concrete operational stage of development, which involves better understanding of new words when connected to real-worldobjects or experiences. Learning is most effective when students can interact with the learning materials in aconcrete way. Learners are more motivated when their activities are interesting and entertaining.

1.2.2. Learning Styles

At this stage, pupils have many learning preferences, which might influence their approach to language acquisition:

- **Visual learners:** benefit most from being shown pictures or visual assistance.
- **Auditory learners:** prefer to learn by listening to music, stories, and rhymes.
- **Kinesthetic learners:** excel at learning through movement or hands-on experiences.

1.2.3. Learning Challenges

Pupils experience a variety of problems that impact their language learning:

- Short attention spans necessitate frequent changes in activity to retain focus.
- Difficulty remembering new words without repetition or contextual use (Schmitt, 2008, pp. 132-135).
- Teachers must constantly encourage and positively reinforce pupils.

1.3. Methods of Teaching Vocabulary

Effective vocabulary teaching strategies are crucial for language acquisition. Vocabulary teaching methods are broadly divided into classic and modern approaches (Nation, 2001, pp. 222-238; Richards & Rodgers, 1986, pp. 15-50, 153-175).

1.3.1. Traditional Methods of Teaching Vocabulary

Traditional methods of teaching vocabulary frequently use repetitious and mechanical procedures, such as:

- Memorising word lists and definitions.
- Repeating words several times in order to commit them to memory.

While these strategies can be beneficial in some instances, they frequently pose challenges:

- They fail to provide any relevant context for the words.
- They do not promote long-term vocabulary memory, which can limit learners' capacity to employ the words successfully in real-life situations.

According to Richards (2000, pp. 58-80), traditional methods, while effective in the short term, are insufficient for deep learning and retention.

1.3.2. Modern Methods of Teaching Vocabulary

Modern methods strive to make vocabulary acquisition more dynamic and engaging for pupils. These approaches include the following:

- **Technology:** Using applications, movies, and online activities to engage pupils in learning vocabulary in an engaging and dynamic manner.
- **Storytelling:** is a method of teaching vocabulary that uses stories, dialogues, or conversations to provide context and help learners comprehend the meaning of words in everyday circumstances.
- **Group Activities:** Promoting collaborative learning through games or projects that allow pupils to practise vocabulary in a social and interactive setting.

According to Nation (2001, pp. 40-60), modern vocabulary teaching approaches emphasise meaningful engagement and contextual learning, both of which are essential for long-term vocabulary acquisition.

1.3.3. The Importance of Context in Teaching Vocabulary

Teaching language in meaningful situations is important because it helps pupils understand how words are employed in real-world scenarios and use new vocabulary correctly in communication. According to Nation (2001, pp. 77-100, 232-249, 341-368), teaching vocabulary in context allows to create deeper relationships with words, which improves their capacity to recall and utilise them in a variety of settings.

Contextual learning not only helps with retention, but it also teaches pupils to see the actual application of the terminology they learn, which improves their language skills.

Furthermore, Richards (2001, pp. 90-110, 155-172) emphasises that contextualised vocabulary education helps learners to engage in meaningful exchanges, thereby improving both fluency and understanding.

1.4. Challenges in Teaching Vocabulary

Teaching vocabulary is a complex endeavor with multiple challenges. These issues influence both pupils and teachers, necessitating effective solutions to overcome. Recognising these obstacles is critical to improving vocabulary teaching approaches.

1.4.1. Challenges Faced by Learners

When learning vocabulary, pupils face a number of problems:

- **Limited exposure to English outside the classroom:** Many pupils do not practice English outside the classroom, limiting their exposure to new terminology.
(Richards, 2001, pp. 36-50; 90-110).

- **Pronouncing English words correctly is difficult:** English pronunciation can be difficult for beginners, especially due to irregular spelling and pronunciation restrictions. As (Thornbury, 2002, pp. 27–28) explains, "*The irregularities in English pronunciation make it difficult for learners to establish consistent patterns.*"

- **Struggling to remember and retain new words:** Without consistent practice and exposure, learners may find it difficult to remember and retain newly learnt vocabulary.
(Schmitt, 2008, pp. 329–363) states that "*regular exposure to vocabulary in different contexts strengthens retention and facilitates recall.*"

According to Richards (2001, pp. 36-50, 90-110), limited exposure to language outside of the classroom is one of the most significant impediments to vocabulary acquisition because it prevents learners from encountering and reinforcing new terms in relevant contexts.

1.4.2. Challenges Faced by Teachers

Teachers also have obstacles while teaching vocabulary, including:

- **Lack of specialised expertise in efficient vocabulary teaching methods:** Many teachers may lack professional training in modern, research-backed vocabulary teaching approaches, making it difficult to successfully promote pupils' vocabulary development.
As (Nation, 2001, pp. 60–113) states, "*effective vocabulary teaching requires a deep understanding of lexical acquisition principles, which many teachers lack due to insufficient training.*"

- **Limited access to resources:** Teachers may have limited access to resources like flashcards, digital tools, and interactive materials that can help pupils learn and engage with language. (Schmitt, 2008, pp. 329–363) highlights that "*resource availability plays a crucial role in vocabulary instruction, as varied materials provide diverse learning experiences.*"

- **Managing large courses with pupils of different abilities:** Teachers frequently confront the issue of managing classrooms with various pupils, some of whom struggle with vocabulary acquisition while others succeed, making individualised attention challenging (Richards, 2001, pp. 114-140, 207-230).

According to Nation (2001, pp. 93-155), effective vocabulary training necessitates the integration of several methodologies and materials. Teachers' restricted access to such resources, as well as their different degrees of experience, can make it difficult for them to give appropriate vocabulary training.

1.5. Factors Affecting Vocabulary Learning

The process of vocabulary learning is impacted by a variety of factors that can be divided into internal and external factors. Understanding these factors is vital for establishing effective vocabulary education tactics. Gu (2003, pp. 25-41) divided vocabulary learning elements into internal (e.g., cognitive ability, motivation, learning strategies) and external (e.g., teaching methods, language exposure, socio-cultural effects).

1.5.1. Internal Factors Affecting Vocabulary Learning

Several internal factors contribute significantly to vocabulary acquisition. These factors are inherent in learners and have a significant impact on their ability to learn and retain vocabulary

1.5.1.1. Motivation

Motivated learners are more likely to acquire new vocabulary and retain it over time. Motivation increases the effort and tenacity that learners put into the learning process, and research has shown that motivated learners engage more deeply with language.
(Gardner 1985, pp. 41–63) explains that "*highly motivated learners are more likely to seek opportunities to use new vocabulary in meaningful contexts, enhancing their learning experience.*"

1.5.1.2. Individual Abilities

Memory and language skills differ among learners. Some pupils have inherently greater memory capacities or language aptitudes, which might aid in their vocabulary acquisition and retention. Individual differences in cognitive capacities, according to Nation (2001, pp. 62-88), can influence how learners process and remember new words. Learners with higher memory skills may find it easier to recall and apply terminology, where Vocabulary retention is influenced by cognitive abilities such as memory and problem solving.

1.5.1.3. Cognitive Abilities

Memory capacity and problem-solving skills significantly influence vocabulary retention. Research by Baddeley (1990, pp. 45–60) highlights that "*working memory plays a crucial role in the acquisition and retrieval of new words.*"

1.5.1.4. Learning Strategies

Effective strategies, such as mnemonic devices, context-based learning, and self-testing, enhance retention. According to Nation (2001, p. 78), "*strategic vocabulary learning fosters deeper understanding and long-term recall.*"

1.5.1.5. Prior Linguistic Knowledge

Learners with exposure to related languages or linguistic structures tend to acquire vocabulary more efficiently. Odlin (1989, p. 102) suggests that" *language transfer can facilitate or hinder vocabulary learning, depending on the similarities between languages.*"

1.5.1.6. Attention and Focus

The ability to concentrate while learning directly affects vocabulary acquisition. Schmidt (1990, p. 145) argues that "*noticing is a necessary condition for converting input into intake, making attention a key factor in language learning.*"

1.5.2. External Factors Affecting Vocabulary Learning

External factors also play an important role in vocabulary acquisition because they alter the learning environment and provide learners with additional assistance.

1.5.2.1. Technology

Learning technologies, such as instructional applications, movies, and online games, are increasingly vital for vocabulary development. These tools provide interactive and engaging experiences, making vocabulary learning more pleasurable and successful.

Chun and Payne (2004) argue that "*technology-assisted vocabulary learning provides immediate feedback, allowing learners to practice words in various contexts, which enhances retention and comprehension*" (pp. 500–502).

1.5.2.2. Parental Support

Parental support is a key external factor that influences vocabulary learning. Pupils who have parental encouragement and assistance, such as practicing English at home or participating in talks about new vocabulary, perform better in terms of word acquisition and retention.

As Quiroz, Snow, and Zhao (2010, p. 391) stated, "*The quality and quantity of mothers' language interactions with their children were significantly associated with children's English vocabulary outcomes.*"

1.6. Theories Supporting Vocabulary Instruction

Several educational theories have been presented to promote effective language instruction. These theories investigate various aspects of how vocabulary is learnt, retained, and applied. The three primary theories are: behavioural, cognitive and sociocultural. Each provides unique perspectives on language development.

1.6.1. The Behavioural Theory

The behavioural theory, largely developed by Skinner (Skinner, 1954, pp. 89-92), emphasises the influence of external factors such as repetition and reinforcement in language learning. This theory proposes that learners acquire vocabulary through conditioned responses to stimuli in their surroundings. These reactions are shaped by repetition and reinforcement, which encourage pupils to recall and use new vocabulary. In the context of vocabulary learning, behavioural theorists contend that regular repetition and reinforcement of words lead to their internalisation. Teachers, for example, may require pupils to constantly practice words and provide positive feedback when they repeat or use the words appropriately. "*Repetition strengthens the learner's recall*" (Skinner, 1954, pp. 89–92). However, the behavioral approach has limits. While it can improve short-term memory retention, it may not result in a thorough comprehension of word meanings or their applications in different settings

1.6.2. The Cognitive Theory

The cognitive theory, created principally by Piaget. He (1977, pp.40-60), emphasises the mental processes involved in word learning. According to cognitive theorists, learners do not passively absorb new words; rather, they actively process them by connecting new language to

their prior knowledge and experience. According to this hypothesis, learners increase their vocabulary by associating new words with concepts they already comprehend.

(Piaget, 1977, pp. 40–60) explains that "*this type of active learning allows learners to internalise vocabulary in a way that promotes long-term retention and retrieval.*"

Similarly, research by (Nation, 2001, pp. 60–113) supports the idea that cognitive processes such as categorisation, visualisation, and association play a crucial role in learning vocabulary. The Cognitive theory holds that the more deeply learners understand the meaning of a word, the greater the chance they will remember it and use it correctly when speaking. This theory encourages activities that require reflection, such as discussing the meaning of words or their use in different sentences and contexts.

1.6.3. The Sociocultural Theory

The sociocultural theory (SCT), developed by Vygotsky (1978, pp. 79–91), emphasises the importance of social interaction in language learning. According to this theory, learners learn vocabulary through interaction with others, not just through individual memorisation. Vocabulary learning is influenced by the social and cultural context surrounding the learner.

The basic idea of this theory is that learners learn vocabulary best when speaking and interacting with teachers, peers, or other knowledgeable individuals. "*Through this social interaction, learners are exposed to vocabulary in real-life contexts, which helps them grasp both the meaning and usage of words in a more authentic way*" (Vygotsky, 1978, pp. 79–91). One of Vygotsky's most important concepts is the zone of proximal development" (ZPD), which suggests that learners learn new words better when they receive help from more experienced people.

The Sociocultural theory also emphasises that words are not learnt in isolation from their environment, but rather within a social and cultural framework that influences their meanings and usage. Therefore, it is important for pupils to engage in meaningful discussions with others to develop their vocabulary.

To sum up, the three theories — behavioral, cognitive, and sociocultural — combine repetition, reflection, and social interaction to explain how we learn and retain vocabulary. Each theory explains vocabulary learning in a different way:

- The behavioural theory sees learning as a result of practice and rewards.
- The cognitive theory focuses on how learners think and understand word meanings.
- The sociocultural theory shows how talking and interacting with others helps learners understand and use new words

Together, these theories give a complete picture of how vocabulary is learned and remembered.

1.7. Conclusion

Vocabulary is very important because it helps anyone learn a language.

Wilkins (1972) states, "*Without grammar very little can be conveyed; without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed*" (p. 111).This chapter has provided a detailed overview of the most important ideas related to vocabulary learning. It began by defining vocabulary and explaining its importance in language learning, focusing on its role in developing listening, reading, speaking, and writing skills. It addressed the needs of third-year pupils, highlighting their cognitive, psychological, and educational development, factors that significantly influence vocabulary learning. The chapter also addressed vocabulary-teaching methods, we have presented traditional and modern methods, and emphasising the importance of teaching vocabulary through meaningful situations and real-life examples. Then, it discussed some of the difficulties faced by teachers and pupils, and factors that influence the learning process, such as motivation and individual abilities, in addition to external factors such as technology and the role of parents.

In brief, this chapter has presented an important theoretical aspect of vocabulary learning. The next chapter will focus on the practical part tof the research, explaining the steps for data collection and analysis.

Chapter Two

Research Methodology

Introduction

This chapter presents a clear and systematic explanation of the research methodology used in this study to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the results. The main aim is to describe the research approach, design, data collection methods, and data analysis procedures, so that the findings genuinely reflect the challenges faced by teachers and learners in teaching English vocabulary. Teaching vocabulary in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, particularly in primary schools in Algeria, presents many challenges such as limited language exposure, short class duration, and pupils' diverse linguistic backgrounds. Because of these complexities, a research methodology that combines both quantitative and qualitative data is necessary. Accordingly, this study adopts a mixed-methods strategy, collecting data through teacher and pupil questionnaires as well as classroom observations. This approach provides a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of vocabulary teaching practices and the difficulties encountered in real classroom settings. This chapter also addresses the ethical considerations related to the conditions under which the participants of the two questionnaires complied. All participants took part voluntarily after being informed about the purpose of the study. Their anonymity and confidentiality were ensured, and they were made aware of their right to withdraw at any time without penalty.

The chapter is structured as follows:

2.1. Research Approach and Design – outlines the type of research and its overall design.

2.2. Participants and Research Context – describes the teachers, pupils, and the environment where the study took place.

2.3. Data Collection Methods – explains the tools and procedures used to gather data.

2.4. Data Analysis Procedures – presents how the collected data were analysed to extract meaningful insights.

2.5. Ethical Considerations – details the ethical compliance of the participants.

2.1. Research Approach and Design

To fulfill the study's aims, this inquiry will use a mixed-methods research methodology. The reason for this methodological approach is provided below.

2.1.1. Justification for the Mixed-Methods Approach

A mixed-methods approach was chosen to provide a thorough knowledge of vocabulary instruction issues by combining statistical data with descriptive insights. This methodological choice is supported for a number of reasons:

- **Two tools:** A questionnaire was distributed to 8 English teachers from different primary schools annexed to Dirah, while 32 third-year pupils from Arroudj Mohamed Primary School participated in the pupil questionnaire. Additionally, 7 different classroom sessions were observed to gain deeper insight into vocabulary teaching practices and pupil engagement.

- **Complementarity:** Quantitative data (e.g., questionnaire responses) highlight general patterns, but qualitative data (e.g., classroom observations) provide more detail on classroom interactions and instructional tactics.

- **Exploratory Dimension:** Given the scarcity of research on vocabulary education in Algerian primary schools, qualitative aspects can assist find developing patterns and instructional issues that quantitative analysis alone may not reveal.

2.1.2. Research Design

The study uses a descriptive-exploratory research approach, which allows for an objective analysis of vocabulary training practices while also looking into instructional tactics and their impact on pupils' vocabulary acquisition.

2.2. Participants and Research Context

The pupil's questionnaire was carried at Arrouj Mohamed primary school-Dirah-Sour EL Ghozlane, focusing on third-year pupils. The teacher's questionnaire involved eight teachers from different primary schools annexed to Dirah.

English was initially introduced into Algerian primary schools in 1993 as an experimental initiative; however, it was subsequently discontinued before being reintroduced into the curriculum in 2022. The research setting presents unique characteristics that shape vocabulary instruction:

- **Limited instructional hours:** English is taught for two sessions per week, each one covers only 45 minutes, and in this study, there is only one English teacher responsible for vocabulary instruction.

- **Minimal exposure to English:** Pupils generally lack or have limited access to English outside school, making vocabulary acquisition challenging.

- **Diverse linguistic backgrounds:** In Algeria, people speak either Arabic or Tamazight, with various regional dialects. This linguistic background influences pupils' approach to learning English vocabulary.

2.2.1. Sampling Strategy

A selective sample strategy was used to guarantee that only those directly participating in vocabulary training were included. The sample consists of:

- **Eight Primary School Teachers:** English teachers responsible for third-year pupils, providing insights into instructional strategies, pedagogical challenges, and classroom experiences. Given the rural context of some schools, one teacher may be responsible for teaching English across multiple schools.

- **Third-Year Primary Pupils:** 32 pupils participated in the study. Selected to assess their vocabulary learning experiences, difficulties, and engagement with instructional techniques. Since third-year pupils are still developing their English proficiency, the questionnaire was written in English and translated into Arabic to ensure comprehension. The analysis of their responses was conducted in English.

2.3. Data Collection Methods

To ensure a rigorous investigation, the study employed three primary data collection instruments:

2.3.1. Teacher's Questionnaire

A systematic questionnaire was issued to eight English teachers to obtain data on:

- The instructional strategies employed for vocabulary teaching.
- The difficulties involved in introducing new terms.
- The significance of instructional materials and classroom supplies.
- Teachers' suggestions for enhancing vocabulary instruction.

The questionnaire included both closed-ended questions (for statistical analysis) and open-ended ones (to elicit detailed viewpoints from teachers).

2.3.2. Pupil's Questionnaire

A short questionnaire written in English then translated into Arabic was developed for third-year primary pupils to assess:

- Their views toward vocabulary learning.
- The difficulties they encounter in understanding and recalling a new language.
- Their involvement with various instructional activities.

Because third-year primary pupils have low command of English, the questionnaire was created in English and translated into Arabic to ensure clarity and access. To aid comprehension, parents assisted their children in reading and answering the questions. However, in order to

adhere to the academic context of this study, the analysis of their responses was carried out in English.

2.3.3. Classroom Observations

Classroom observations were carried out to investigate real-world vocabulary teaching methods. The observations focused on:

- The strategies teachers use to introduce and reinforce language.
- Pupil reactions and degrees of participation.
- The efficacy of strategies like repetition and interactive exercises. A standardised observation checklist was utilised to guarantee that data were collected consistently and reliably.

We were inspired by Cohen, Manion, & Morrison's methodology (2018, pp. 272-281).

2.4. Data Analysis Procedures

The acquired data were analysed using both quantitative and qualitative methods:

- To discover trends, quantitative data (from questionnaires) were evaluated using descriptive statistics (such as frequency counts and percentages).
- Thematic analysis was used to examine qualitative data (from open-ended replies and observations), discovering reoccurring themes and patterns linked to educational tactics and problems.

2.5. Ethical Considerations

To maintain ethical integrity throughout the research process, this study adhered to fundamental ethical principles that ensured respect for the rights and safety of participants at all stages of the research. These principles are particularly important given the participation of children (third-year primary school pupils), requiring special care to ensure their protection and safety throughout the study.

2.5.1. Informed Consent

Teacher participants were clearly informed of the purpose, nature, and scope of the study before agreeing to participate. Participation was entirely voluntary, and no participant was forced or pressured. For third-year pupils, written consent was obtained from their parents or guardians to ensure legal and ethical compliance. We explained the questions and procedures in simple, age-appropriate language to help pupils understand what was required of them and reduce any confusion or anxiety.

Furthermore, pupils and teachers were reminded of their full right to withdraw at any stage of the research without facing any negative consequences. This took place in a safe and respectful environment, where participants felt free to make their own decisions about their participation.

2.5.2. Confidentiality and Anonymity

In addition to ensuring informed consent, it was also essential to protect the privacy of participants throughout the research process. All responses were treated with strict confidentiality. To protect the identity of participants, their names were replaced with codes in the data records. No information was shared with third parties, and the data were used for academic purposes only.

2.5.3. Objectivity and Accuracy

In addition to ensuring privacy and confidentiality, the researcher maintained objectivity throughout the study. A neutral and unbiased stance was maintained during the data collection and analysis processes. We ensured that personal beliefs or expectations did not influence the way the data were collected, interpreted, or presented. For example, when observing classroom activities or analyzing survey responses, we relied on pre-established criteria and avoided making personal assumptions about participants.

Data were analysed in a systematic and fair manner that reflected participants' actual responses. The goal was to provide accurate findings based on factual evidence, rather than tailoring the results to fit a particular theory or expectation. This approach might enhance the credibility and reliability of the research.

2.5.4. Respect for Participants

Finally, respect for all participants was considered as a guiding value of the study. The research was designed to minimize any potential discomfort, stress, or inconvenience to participating teachers and pupils. Classroom observations were conducted in a thoughtful manner, ensuring that the normal flow of lessons was not disrupted. We behaved politely and professionally at all times, ensuring that participants felt comfortable and respected.

No personal or sensitive questions were asked that might cause embarrassment. Pupils were encouraged to ask questions or express concerns. This respectful approach contributed to creating a positive environment and mutual trust, which contributed to improving the quality of the collected data.

2.6. Conclusion

    This chapter explained the study's methodological structure, including the research strategy, participant selection, data collection instruments and the analysis techniques. The use of a mixed methods approach ensures a comprehensive assessment of vocabulary instruction issues and the efficacy of alternative teaching tactics. The study attempts to offer a solid foundation for the future discussion of findings by utilising both quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods. The following chapter analyses and discusses the obtained data, emphasising major findings and their implications for improving vocabulary training in Algerian primary schools.

Chapter Three

Data analysis and discussion

Introduction

This chapter presents a thorough analysis and discussion of the data collected from teacher and pupil questionnaires, as well as classroom observations. The primary aim is to identify the key challenges associated with vocabulary instruction for third-year primary school pupils in Algeria our case study sample was selected from one primary school of Bouira- and to assess the effectiveness of various teaching strategies. By examining both quantitative and qualitative data, the study seeks to provide deeper insights into the difficulties faced by teachers and pupils, as well as propose potential improvement for vocabulary teaching practices.

The chapter is structured as follows:

3.1. Participants and Data Collection Context – provides an overview of the teachers and pupils involved and the conditions under which data were collected.

3.2. Analysis of Teacher Questionnaire – explores teaching strategies, instructional challenges, and teacher perspectives on vocabulary instruction.

3.3. Analysis of Pupil Questionnaire – examines pupils' attitudes, preferred vocabulary learning methods, and common difficulties encountered.

3.4. Classroom Observations – offers insights into how vocabulary instruction is implemented in practice, with emphasis on teaching methods and pupil engagement.

3.5. Discussion of Findings – interprets the key results and synthesises them in light of the study's objectives.

3.6. Limitations of the study – discusses the challenges and difficulties encountered during the research process.

3.7. Recommendations for Improving Vocabulary Instruction – proposes concrete steps to enhance vocabulary teaching based on the analysis.

3.1. Participants and Data Collection Context

During the data collection stage, a number of contextual and logistical constraints affected the overall number of participants. Eight teachers responded to the questionnaire. This limited response was largely attributed to the remote and mountainous nature of certain areas, which rendered access to some schools particularly challenging. In some cases, English language teachers were not present at the time of the visit, as many of them were assigned to more than two schools. With regard to the pupils, 32 completed and returned the questionnaire. One pupil was absent the day of distribution.

3.2. Analysis of Teacher Questionnaire

The teacher's questionnaire aimed to gather insights into the strategies used for vocabulary instruction, the challenges faced by teachers, and their views on improving vocabulary teaching.

3.2.1. Teaching Strategies Employed by Teachers

Our questionnaire was distributed to eight teachers from different schools. The responses revealed that teachers employ a variety of strategies to facilitate vocabulary learning, including:

- **Repetition and Drilling:** Appeared the most used strategy, where 6 teachers, which represents 75% of respondents, they said always use this method, while 1 teacher, representing 12.5%, used it often. 1 other teacher, equating 12.5%, used it sometimes, with no teachers, representing 0%, using it rarely and none, equating to 0%, never using it. This demonstrates the fixed role of repetition in reinforcing lexical recall, nevertheless its dominance may reduce opportunities for extra practice in communication.

- **Interactive Activities and Games:** They were similarly prevalent we find 4 teachers, representing 50% of respondents, they always combined games (e.g., word-matching, competitions) in every lesson, while 3 others, equating to 37.5%, did so often. 1 teacher, representing 12.5%, used these strategies sometimes, however, no teachers, equating to 0%, rarely applied them, and none, representing 0%, never used it. This reflects deep engagement with pupil-centered strategies, though the 50% "always" rate indicates the possibility of more consistent implementation throughout classrooms.

- **Contextualised Learning:** shown different practices. 4 teachers, which equates to 50% of respondents, always used vocabulary through significant contexts, while 2 teachers, equating to 25%, often did so. Remarkably, no teachers, equating to 0% sometimes employed this strategy, while 1 teacher, representing 12.5%, rarely used it, and 1 teacher, equaling 12.5%, never avoided it completely. This strategy suggests contextual teaching requires either full obligation or is avoided completely, possibly due to variations in training or resources.

- **Translation into Arabic:** demonstrated the most limited strategy. No teachers equating to 0% said always using translation, and none equating to 0% used it often. A single teacher equating to 12.5% sometimes uses translation, while 5 others equating to 62.5% rarely used it and 2 teachers representing 25% never used it. This limits a strong institutional preference for deep teaching, with irregular translation used only as a last choice.

**Figure 1: Teaching Strategies Employed by Teachers**
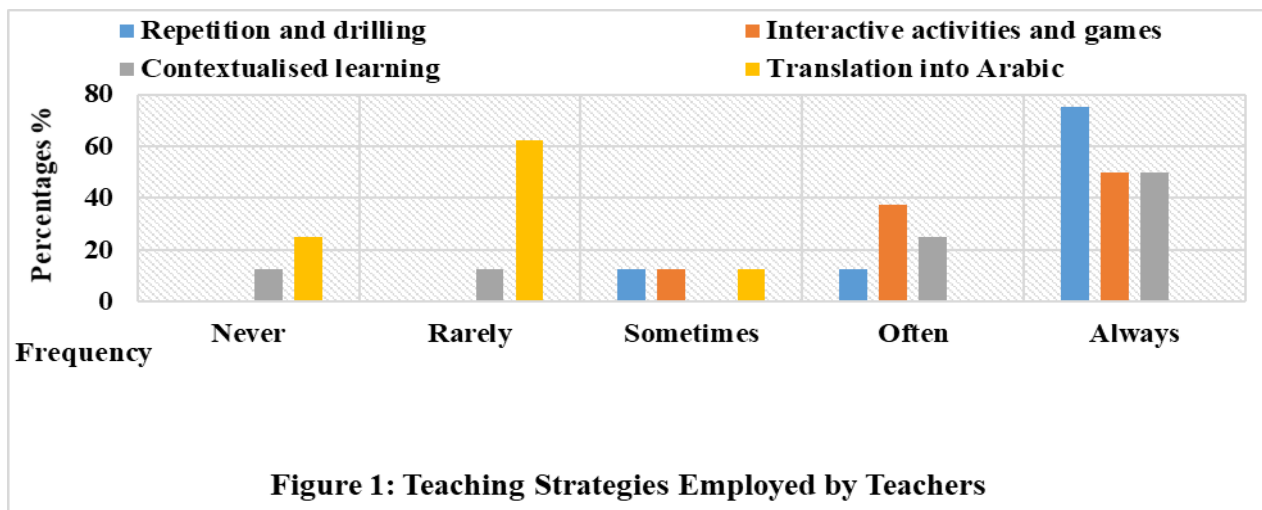
English teachers used different strategies as shown in the figure. The repetition and drilling strategy is the most consistently used method, with 75% of respondents indicating they always use it, and others often using it at 12.5%. Interactive activities and games are also widely used, with 50% using them always and 37.5% often in their lessons. The contextual learning strategy is used reasonably, with half of the teachers using it always and 25% often. In contrast, translation into Arabic is the minimum used strategy, with 62.5% of teachers using it rarely and 25% never using it. These results indicate a general preference for interactive and context-based methods over reliance on the mother tongue.

3.2.2. Challenges Encountered by Teachers

The questionnaire results highlighted several common difficulties in vocabulary instruction:

- **Limited Classroom Time:** The data reveals varying experiences among the 8 teachers. 2 teachers always face limited time with (25%), while 2 others frequently encounter them (25%). Occasionally, 2 other teachers face these time constraints (25%), and one teacher rarely encounters them (12.5%), while 1 teacher never faces this issue (12.5%). The data indicate that half of the teachers regularly face these time pressures, which may hinder effective vocabulary teaching.

- **Pupils' Low Motivation:** Generally, no teacher always faces motivational challenges, representing (0%) as the figure shows. 1 teacher equating (12.5%) frequently faces these challenges, but sometimes 1 teacher with (12.5%) faces them. While rarely 2 teachers, who represent (25%), find problems in motivation, while 4 teachers represent (50%), never face this problem. While most teachers equating (75%) rarely face interaction difficulties, a minority at (25%) report persistent challenges in sustaining pupils' interest.

- **Lack of Teaching Materials:** There are clear differences in resources shown in the image. 3 teachers representing (37.5%) always lack resources، while none of them face this problem very often. 1 teacher equating (12.5%) occasionally faces a lack, 1 teacher (12.5%) rarely find problems، and 3 others at (37.5%) never lack resources. This significantly influences the quality and stability of teaching between well-resourced and under-resourced classrooms.

- **Pronunciation Difficulties:** Teaching pronunciation presents ongoing challenges for many teachers. 1 teacher equals (12.5%) always had difficulties with pronunciation, while 3 teachers representing (37.5%) often had difficulties. 1 teacher equating (12.5%) found difficulties sometimes, another rarely had difficulties, and 2 teachers representing (25%) never had difficulties. This means that half of the teachers regularly had difficulties with pronunciation, generally due to their lack of native English and mother tongue interference. "*Without access to proper teaching resources, it is challenging to make vocabulary lessons interactive and engaging,*" noted another teacher.

**Figure 2: Challenges Encountered by Teachers**
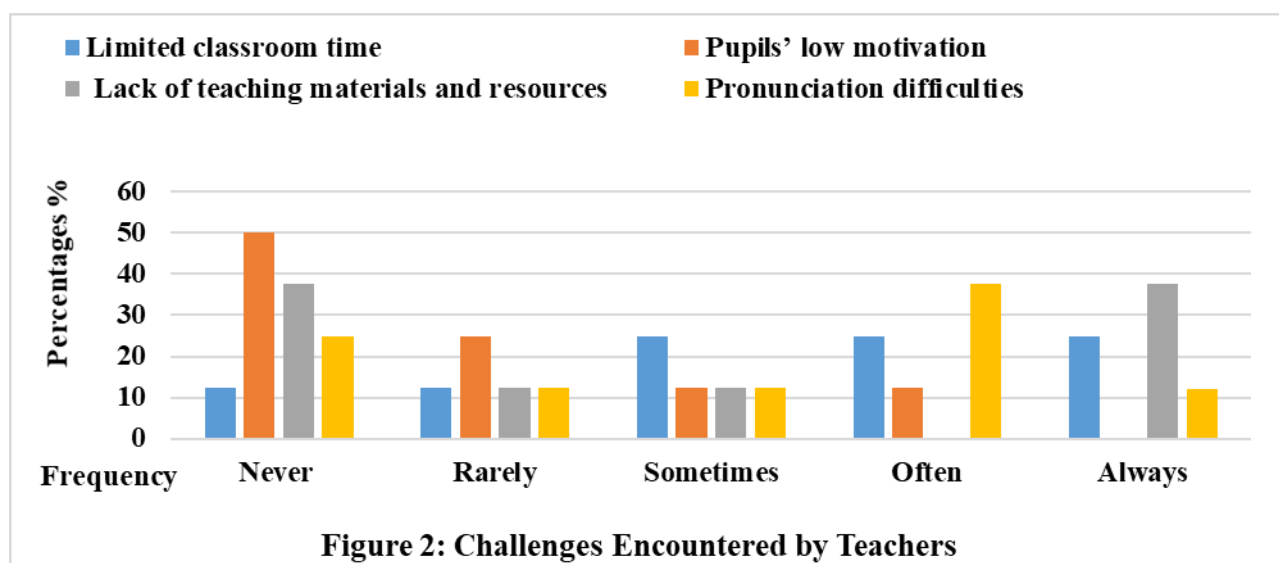
This figure clearly shows the prevalence of the main challenges teachers face in teaching vocabulary. The data reveal that the most common problems are limited time and pronunciation difficulties, with 50% of teachers (4 out of 8) encountering these challenges frequently or always. In contrast, low pupils motivation appears to be less widespread, with 75% of teachers (6 out of 8) reporting that they rarely or never encounter this problem. It is worth noting that the availability of resources shows a significant gap while 37.5% of teachers (3 out of 8) always lack resources, an equal percentage (37.5%) never encounter this problem, highlighting a significant inequality in school resources.

3.3. Analysis of Pupil Questionnaire

The pupil's questionnaire sought to explore pupils' attitudes towards vocabulary learning, the difficulties they encounter, and their preferred learning methods.

3.3.1. Pupils' Attitudes Towards Vocabulary Learning

The results showed that 27 pupils representing (84.4%) expressed enthusiasm for learning new vocabulary, especially when the lesson included interactivity or visuals. In contrast, 5 pupils equating (15.6%) felt frustrated when learning vocabulary, especially when the new words were presented without the help of pictures or engaging contexts.

**Figure 3: Pupils' Attitudes Towards Vocabulary Learning**
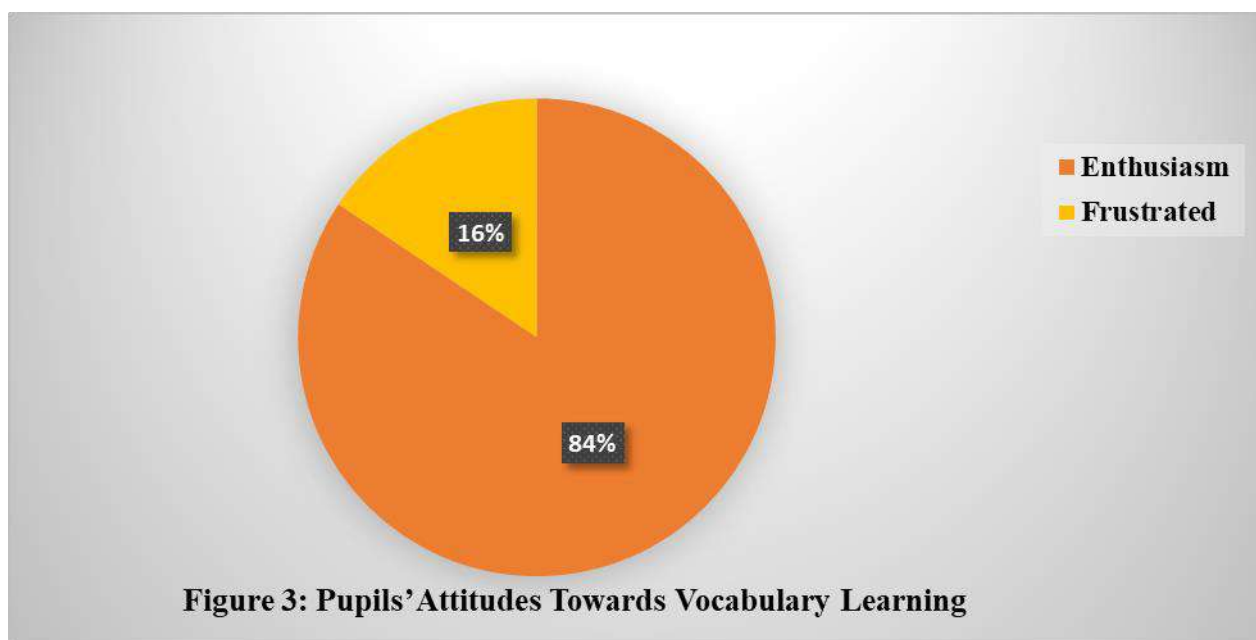
The figure clearly shows that the majority of pupils at (84.4%) demonstrate a positive attitude toward vocabulary learning, especially when using interactive and visually supported methods. However, a smaller percentage at (15.6%) experience frustration, often due to the lack of contextual or illustrative aids, highlighting the importance of interactive and purposeful teaching methods in supporting and enhancing pupils' motivation.

3.3.2. Vocabulary Learning Methods

Pupils' responses revealed the following insights into their preferred methods for learning English vocabulary:

- **Flashcards**: 14 pupils equates to 43.75% reported using flashcards to memorise and review vocabulary.
- **Pictures**: 18 pupils equates to 56.25% rely on visual imagery to support vocabulary retention.

- **Games**: 12 pupils equates to 37.5% engage with vocabulary through educational games, indicating a preference for interactive learning.

- **Writing and repeating words**: 25 pupils equates to 78.13% of pupils consider this method highly effective for committing new words to memory.

- **Translating words into Arabic**: 22 pupils representing 68.75% of pupils use translation as a strategy to better understand word meanings.

Figure 4: Vocabulary Learning Methods
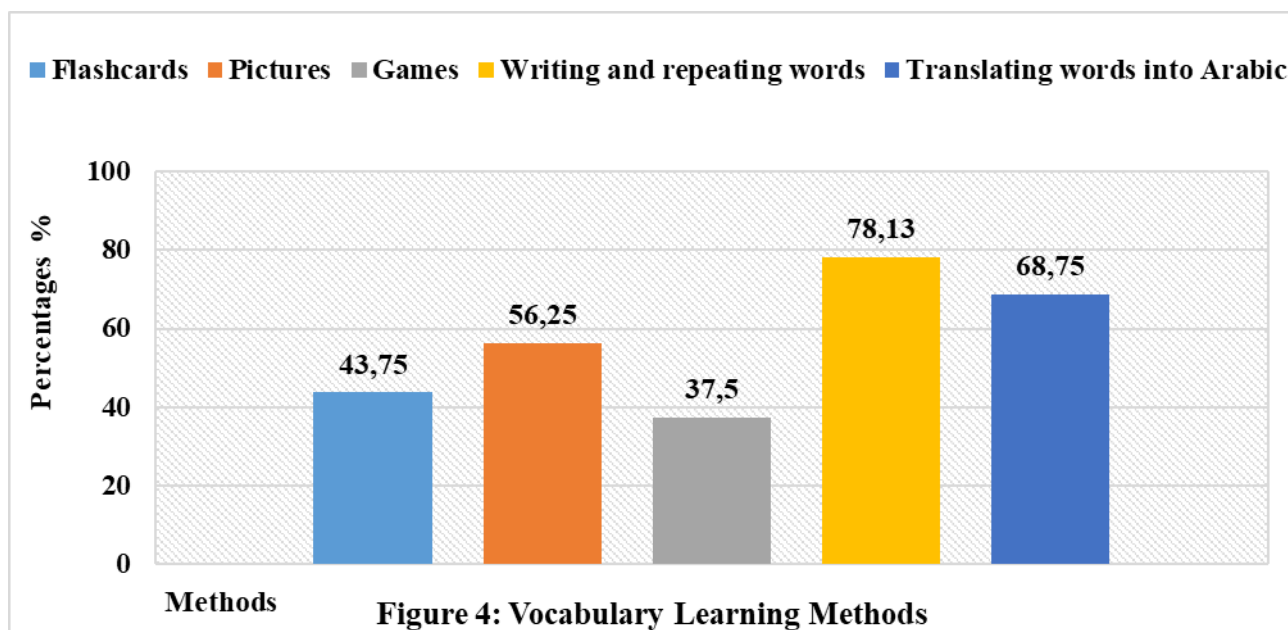
The figure reveals that the most popular vocabulary learning methods among pupils are writing and word repetition, with 78.13% of participants identifying them as an effective strategy. Translation into Arabic also ranked highly at 68.75%, indicating a strong reliance on native language support. Meanwhile, 56.25% of pupils used pictures, highlighting the role of visual aids in vocabulary retention. Flashcards were used by 43.75% of pupils, while games appeared to be the least preferred method, used by 37.5%. While the results indicate the dominance of traditional methods used by teachers, visual and interactive methods should also be highly valued by learners.

3.3.3. Common Difficulties Reported by Pupils

Pupils identified several key challenges in learning vocabulary:

- **Difficulty Remembering Words**: Significant challenges in vocabulary retention were revealed by an analysis of 32 pupils. Twelve of them, representing 37.5%, occasionally forgot new words, while 10 pupils, representing 31.3%, had difficulty remembering them. Six pupils, representing 18.8%, reported regularly forgetting words without frequent review. One pupil, representing 3.1%, rarely encountered difficulties, while

three others, representing 9.4%, never encountered this problem. These results show that 87.5% of pupils, representing 28 out of 32, needed more systematic reinforcement strategies for vocabulary retention.

- **Spelling and Pronunciation Struggles:** The data shows significant difficulties with spelling and pronunciation in English. 12 pupils equals (37.5%) have often difficulties with spelling and pronunciation, while 8 pupils represent (25%) have always difficulties. while10 pupils equating (31.3%) have sometimes difficulties, while no pupils equal (0%) report rare difficulties. Only 2 pupils representing 6.3% never experience these difficulties. This indicates that 62.5% of pupils, 20 out of 32 pupils, regularly experience significant obstacles in spelling and pronunciation, most likely due to overlapping English (L1) and inadequate phonics training.

- **Limited English Exposure Outside Classroom:** It represents significant challenges for learners. Ten pupils equals (31.3%) always struggle with limited English communication outside of school, while five pupils representing (15.6%) often face this challenge. Nine pupils (28.1%) sometimes face difficulties, four others equating (12.5%) rarely face this problem, and four pupils (12.5%) do not report any problems. This suggests that limited English communication outside of school reduces opportunities for vocabulary consolidation and practice, making classroom learning even more important. *"I like learning new words when we play games, but sometimes I forget them after a few days,"* remarked one pupil. *" أحب تعلم كلمات جديدة عندما نلعب ألعاباً، لكنني أحياناً أنساها بعد بضعة أيام "*

Figure 5: Common Difficulties Reported by Pupils
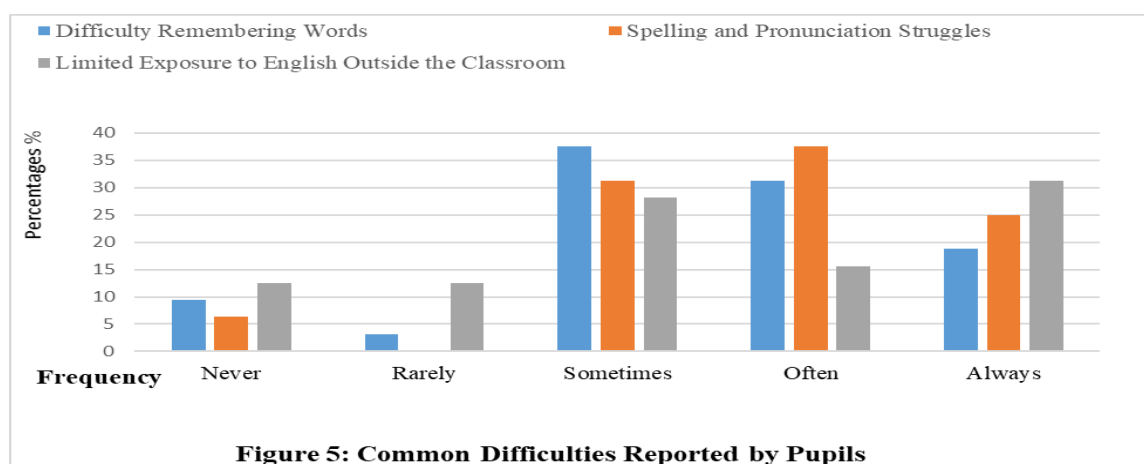
    The figure illustrates the key difficulties pupils face when learning English vocabulary. Memorising words is the most common challenge, with 37.5% of pupils frequently forgetting words, and 18.8% always having difficulty remembering them, indicating a pressing need for better reinforcement methods. Difficulties with pronunciation and spelling consistently affect

25% of pupils, highlighting the need for targeted phonics training. Moreover, 31.3% of pupils reported having little exposure to English outside the classroom, emphasising the importance of providing more practical training opportunities. Together, these findings demonstrate the need for pedagogical regulations to address these consistent challenges

3.4. Classroom Observations

Classroom observations provided valuable insights into the practical implementation of vocabulary instruction by the teacher.

In total, 7 classroom sessions were attended at Arrouj Mohamed school. These sessions were selected to represent a range of lesson types and classroom contexts, offering a broader perspective on vocabulary teaching practices. The observations contributed to a more comprehensive understanding of how English vocabulary is introduced, practised, and reinforced in real classroom environments.

The key findings are as follows:

- **Use of Repetition and Drilling:** It indicated that repetition and drilling was consistently used in all 7 lessons, representing 100% of the lessons. This indicates the teacher's strong support on this method. From the pupils' perspective, 25 of them, representing 78.13%, reported that writing and repeating new words helped them effectively to acquire vocabulary. This close consistency highlights the effectiveness of the teacher's strategy in enhancing information comprehension and goes learners' expectations.

- **Limited Use of Interactive Methods:** The use of interactive methods, such as flashcards, pictures, and games, was observed in only 4 sessions, representing 57.14% of the lessons. In contrast, 14 pupils, representing 45.83%, reported preferring these interactive methods for learning vocabulary well. Despite the observed consistency, this gap indicates a need to integrate these methods more widely. This would better meet pupils' preferences and enhance lesson effectiveness by increasing engagement and motivation.

- **Pupil Engagement:** Active pupils participation was observed in 6 sessions, at a rate of 85.71%. This was particularly evident during lessons that included interactive elements such as games and visual aids. However, only 14 pupils, representing 45.83% expressed a clear preference for interactive learning experiences. Although pupils may not always express their preferences, their level of engagement improves significantly when interactive strategies are used. Therefore, enhancing interactive classroom practices remains essential for sustaining high levels of pupil engagement.

Figure 6: Classroom Observations vs Pupil's Preferences
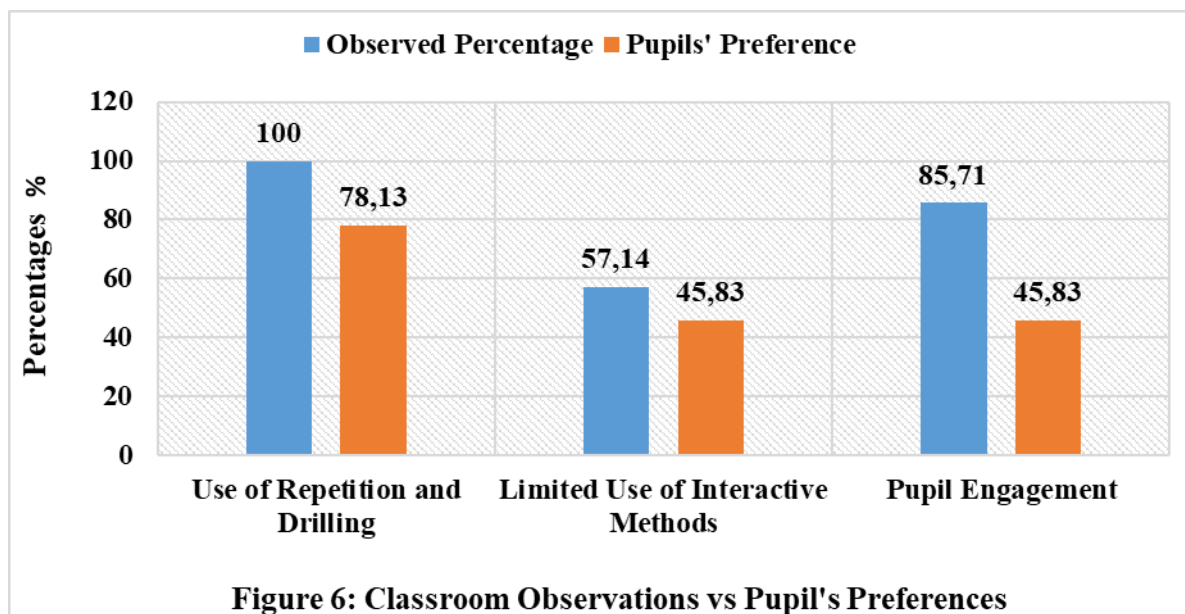
The figure shows clearly that repetition and drilling are the dominant teaching strategies, while interactive methods and pupil interaction appear underutilised relative to pupil preferences. Although repetition has proven highly effective in promoting vocabulary retention, the data suggest that increasing the frequency with which interactive methods are merged, along with increased pupil interaction, could lead to a more stable and effective teaching approach. By incorporating additional interactive techniques, teachers will be better placed to accommodate pupil preferences, enhance pupil engagement, and thus improve vocabulary learning outcomes.

3.5. Discussion of Findings

The data showed that teachers face challenges in teaching vocabulary, while pupils encounter difficulties in learning and retaining new words. Repetition and drilling were used in all lessons and were found helpful by 78.13% of pupils, confirming their effectiveness in retaining information. However, interactive methods were used in only 57.14% of lessons, despite 45.83% of pupils preferring interactive tools such as games and visual aids. Pupil engagement was high at 85.71% when these methods were used, indicating their positive impact. These results highlight the need for a more balanced approach that combines repetition and interactive strategies to support learning and motivation.

Based on these findings, the study was also able to assess the validity of the four hypotheses proposed in the introduction. The validation is summarised as follows:

– H1: It has indeed been confirmed that pupils face difficulties in pronunciation, writing, and memorisation, as reported by both pupils and teachers.

– H2: Limited exposure to English outside the classroom weakens pupils; ability to memorise vocabulary. This was confirmed by the pupils' feedback.

– H3: It has been partially confirmed that interactive methods are more effective than traditional memorisation, but their application is still limited.

– H4: Vocabulary acquisition improves significantly when teaching methods are adapted to meet pupils' needs; failure to adapt leads to poor results. This has been confirmed.

3.5.1. Addressing the Challenges

To mitigate these challenges, teachers should:

- Integrate more interactive methods such as storytelling, role-playing, and digital learning tools.
- Increase the use of English in classroom interactions to help pupils develop better word recognition and retention skills.
- Advocate for improved teaching resources, including flashcards, digital platforms, and supplementary vocabulary books.

3.6. Limitations of the Study

While carrying out this research, we faced some difficulties and obstacles such as:

- **Limited participants:** The study involved only 8 teachers from a limited number of schools and 32 pupils from a single primary school, limiting the generalisability of findings to broader contexts.
- **Limited geographic scope:** Data were collected from a remote, mountainous region in Bouira (Dirah –Sour El-Ghozlan), Algeria, which may not reflect challenges or practices in urban or other regional settings.
- **Implementation challenges:** Teacher inconsistent availability due to assignments across multiple schools and limited access to schools affected participant diversity and data completeness.
- **Self-report limitations:** Reliance on questionnaires risks response bias, as participants might have provided socially desirable answers rather than providing truthful answers.
- **Limited Observations:** Only 7 classroom sessions were observed, potentially overlooking variations in teaching methods across different contexts or times.
- **Lack of Longitudinal Data:** The study captured a snapshot of practices and challenges but did not assess long-term outcomes of vocabulary instruction strategies.

3.7. Recommendations for Improving Vocabulary Instruction

Based on the study findings, the following recommendations can be proposed:

1. Enhance the use of visual and digital resources: Teachers should integrate pictures, videos, and educational apps to reinforce vocabulary learning.

2. Promote active learning strategies: Implementing games, role-playing activities and storytelling can boost pupil engagement.

3. Increase English exposure in the classroom: Encouraging teachers to use English for classroom instructions and simple conversations can aid vocabulary retention.

4. Provide teacher training: Professional development programs can equip teachers with modern techniques for vocabulary instruction.

5. Develop supplementary materials: Schools should invest in additional vocabulary books, flashcards, and interactive resources.

3.8. Conclusion

This chapter has examined the research findings, identifying both the main challenges and successful strategies in teaching vocabulary. The results clearly showed that interactive and practical teaching methods help pupils learn new words more effectively. The evidence suggests that using engaging activities, along with better teacher training and resources, can significantly improve how learners acquire vocabulary.

For best results, teachers should combine traditional methods like repetition with modern interactive approaches. This balanced way of teaching works well for different types of learners. To make real progress, we need to solve ongoing problems like limited lesson time, pronunciation difficulties, and lack of teaching materials.

These findings show that everyone involved - teachers, school leaders and education officials - needs to work together to make lasting improvements to how vocabulary is taught.

General conclusion

General Conclusion

  This dissertation has conducted a thorough investigation into the difficulties and instructional strategies related to English vocabulary acquisition among third-year primary school pupils in Algeria. By integrating theoretical research with practical fieldwork—including classroom observations and questionnaires for both teachers and pupils—the study has provided a multidimensional understanding of vocabulary teaching in the Algerian EFL context.

  The research highlighted that vocabulary acquisition is a core component of early language development. It plays a critical role in shaping pupils' abilities to comprehend, communicate, and participate in both academic and real-world contexts. Vocabulary learning is not a mechanical act of memorising words; it is a process that involves phonological processing, semantic understanding, contextual awareness and cognitive engagement. As such, vocabulary teaching must go beyond mere repetition and address the broader linguistic and cognitive needs of learners.

  The Findings of this study revealed that repetition and drilling are widely employed by teachers. These methods often dominate classroom instruction to the detriment of more interactive and communicative practices. These traditional approaches are embedded in historical educational models and are further reinforced by constraints such as insufficient time, lack of teaching materials, and limited professional development. Teachers often resort to these techniques because they are familiar, manageable in large classes, and aligned with curriculum demands. However, this overreliance risks reducing vocabulary learning to a passive process that does not engage pupils at a deeper level.

  The research also demonstrated that learners face a range of challenges when acquiring new vocabulary. Pronunciation difficulties, inconsistent spelling patterns in English, and limited retention were commonly reported. These issues are intensified by the fact that many pupils have little to no exposure to English beyond the classroom. In Algeria, Arabic and French dominate daily communication, leaving English confined to a short-weekly presence in school. This limited exposure restricts the natural reinforcement needed for language acquisition and makes vocabulary learning a more isolated and fragmented process.

  Despite these challenges, the study observed that when teachers used interactive methods —such as role-playing, flashcards, or visual storytelling— pupil engagement and understanding improved noticeably. Pupils responded positively to activities that were context-rich and participatory, suggesting that these methods cater better to their developmental stage. However, the inconsistent application of such strategies highlights a gap between theory and practice.

While teachers recognise the value of interactive instruction, they often lack the resources, support, or training to implement these methods effectively.

This research also explored the theoretical foundations underpinning vocabulary acquisition, drawing on behavioural, cognitive and sociocultural learning theories. These frameworks emphasise the importance of repetition, mental processing, and social interaction in vocabulary learning. Taken together, they suggest that vocabulary instruction should be multifaceted —incorporating memory-based activities, cognitive engagement, and meaningful interaction to ensure lasting retention and use of new words.

To address the identified challenges, this study proposes several recommendations:
At the pedagogical level, vocabulary teaching should adopt a blended approach that combines repetition with interactive, meaningful activities. Teachers should be encouraged to integrate games, storytelling, role-play and the use of realia to make vocabulary more relevant and memorable. These techniques are particularly effective for young learners who benefit from hands-on, visual and auditory stimulation. Curriculum developers should also consider reducing content overload to allow more time for vocabulary practice and consolidation.

At the systemic level, educational authorities should invest in teacher training programs that focus on practical classroom strategies rather than abstract theory. Training should equip teachers with the tools and confidence to implement context-based instruction using whatever resources are available. For schools in remote or under-resourced areas, authorities can establish regional resource hubs or digital repositories to distribute low-cost teaching materials. Furthermore, involving parents and local communities in language activities can help extend vocabulary learning beyond the classroom, reinforcing exposure and application.

The implications of this study go beyond vocabulary teaching alone. They point to a broader need for alignment between pedagogical theory, classroom reality and systemic support. Vocabulary is not simply a component of language learning—it is its backbone. Without a robust vocabulary base, learners struggle to develop other essential skills such as reading comprehension, writing fluency, listening accuracy and oral expression. Therefore, improving vocabulary instruction can have a ripple effect, enhancing pupils' overall language competence and academic success.

Moreover, the study has positively confirmed the four research hypotheses outlined at the outset. It confirmed that pupils face challenges in vocabulary learning related to pronunciation, spelling and memorisation. It also indicated that limited exposure to English outside the classroom negatively affects vocabulary retention. While traditional methods like repetition are widely used, interactive and context-rich strategies were found to be more effective though not

yet consistently implemented. Most notably, the study affirmed that aligning vocabulary teaching methods with pupils' cognitive and developmental needs significantly develops learning outcomes. These findings not only support the initial hypotheses but also reinforce the call for pedagogical reform in vocabulary instruction.

In conclusion, this study reaffirms that vocabulary acquisition in primary education must be approached as a dynamic, learner-centred process. For Algerian pupils to thrive in English language learning, instruction must evolve to become more engaging, inclusive, and responsive to learners' developmental needs. Teachers, curriculum designers, and policymakers should work collaboratively to remove barriers and promote best practices. By doing so, they can ensure that vocabulary learning is not just about word memorisation but also about fostering curiosity, confidence and communication in a new language. With sustained effort and innovation, vocabulary teaching in Algerian primary schools can become a pathway not only to language proficiency but also to broader educational and personal empowerment.

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Appendices

- **Appendix A :** Teacher's Questionnaire

Teacher's Questionnaire

Strategies and Challenges in Teaching English Vocabulary to Primary School Pupils
This questionnaire aims to explore the methods used by teachers to teach English vocabulary, the challenges they face, and their suggestions for improvement.

1. General Information

- **Gender :** ☐ **Male**   ☐ **Female**
- **Years of Teaching Experience:** ☐ **1–5 years**   ☐ **6–10 years**   ☐ **More than 10 years**
- **Level Taught:** ☐ **3rd Year Primary**   ☐ **Other:** _____

2. Teaching Strategies

Please indicate the strategies you use and how frequently you use them.

(✓if used, then select frequency: 1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Always)

<u>Strategy</u>	<u>Used</u>	1	2	3	4	5
- **Repetition and drilling**	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
- **Interactive activities and games**	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
- **Contextualized learning (using vocabulary in sentences/dialogues)**	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
- **Translation into Arabic**	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

3. Use of Translation

- Do you often use translation when teaching new vocabulary?

    ☐ **Yes**   ☐ **Sometimes**   ☐ **No**

- If yes, why do you use translation? (Tick all that apply)

☐ **Pupils do not understand English explanation**   ☐ **It saves time**

☐ **It helps clarify meaning**   ☐ **Other (please specify):**

4. Vocabulary Teaching Challenges

Please indicate how often you encounter the following challenges when teaching vocabulary.
(1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Always)

Challenge	1	2	3	4	5
Limited time allocated for English	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Lack of pupil motivation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Lack of teaching materials and resources	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Pupils' pronunciation difficulties	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Pupil's Questionnaire   استبيان التلاميذ

Vocabulary Learning Experiences of 3rd Year Primary School Pupils

تجارب تعلم المفردات لدى تلاميذ السنة الثالثة من التعليم الابتدائي

This questionnaire is designed to investigate the attitudes, difficulties, and preferences of 3rd-year primary school pupils regarding vocabulary learning.
يهدف هذا الاستبيان إلى دراسة مواقف، صعوبات، وتفضيلات تلاميذ السنة الثالثة من التعليم الابتدائي تجاه تعلم المفردات.

1. General Information /   معلومات عامة

✓ **Gender : الجنس**   □ Male / ذكر   □ Female / أنثى

✓ **Age : العمر**

□ 8–9 years / سنوات 9-8   □ 10–11 years / سنة 11-10   □ 12–13 years / سنة 13-12

✓ **Do you like learning English vocabulary?**   هل تحب تعلم مفردات اللغة الإنجليزية؟

□ Yes / نعم   □ No / لا

2. Vocabulary Learning Methods and Frequency   طرق وتكرار تعلم المفردات
✓ **Which of the following methods help you learn new vocabulary?**
أي من الطرق التالية تساعدك في تعلم مفردات جديدة؟
(You can choose more than one.)   (يمكنك اختيار أكثر من واحدة)

- □ **Flashcards /** البطاقات التعليمية
- □ **Pictures /** الصور
- □ **Games /** الألعاب
- □ **Writing and repeating words /** كتابة وتكرار الكلمات
- □ **Translating words into Arabic /** ترجمة الكلمات إلى العربية
- □ **Other:** _____ / أخرى: _____

✓ **How often do you use these methods to learn new vocabulary?** كم مرة تستخدم هذه الطرق
لتعلم المفردات الجديدة؟

- □ **Twice a week /** مرتين في الأسبوع
- □ **Once a week /** مرة في الأسبوع
- □ **A few times a week /** عدة مرات في الأسبوع
- □ **Rarely /** نادرًا

3. Vocabulary Learning Challenges and Difficulties   تحديات وصعوبات تعلم المفردات

✓ **Please rate how often you face each of the following difficulties:**
يرجى تقييم عدد مرات مواجهتك لكل صعوبة من الصعوبات التالية:
(دائمًا 5/Always غالبًا 4/ Often أحيانًا 3/ Sometimes نادرًا 2/ Rarely أبدًا 1/ Never)

Challenges and difficulties (التحديات و الصعوبات)	1/Never أبدا	2/Rarely نادرا	3/ Sometimes أحيانا	4/ Often غالبا	5/ Always دائما
I forget words quickly أنسى الكلمات بشرعة					
I struggle with spelling and pronouncing english word correctly أجد صعوبة في تهجئة و نطق الكلمات الإنجليزية بشكل صحيح					
I don't practice English outside the Classrom لا أمارس اللغة الإنجليزية خارج القسم					

Appendix C: Classroom Observation Checklist

The following checklist was designed to guide classroom observations conducted during this research. It is based on the observation framework proposed by Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018, pp. 272–281), and was adapted to suit the context of English vocabulary teaching in Algerian primary schools. The checklist focuses on key aspects such as teaching strategies, pupil engagement, use of materials, and classroom environment. Its aim is to ensure systematic and consistent data collection across the seven observed sessions.

Category	Observed (✓/✗)	Comments
Lesson Context		Lesson topic clearly stated
		Vocabulary goal identified
		Use of English during the lesson
Teaching Strategies		Repetition and drilling
		Use of visual aids (pictures, flashcards)
		Use of games/interactive activities
		Use of contextual examples
		Use of the pupils' L1 (Arabic)
Pupil Engagement		Pupils respond to teacher prompts
		Pupils actively participate
		Pupils ask questions or show curiosity

	Pupils complete vocabulary tasks
Materials and Resources	Use of textbook or handouts
	Use of board (chalk/whiteboard)
	Use of ICT/digital materials
Classroom Environment	Teacher's tone is clear and supportive
	Pupils are focused and attentive
	Classroom is organised for interaction
Assessment & Review	Vocabulary reviewed at end of lesson
	Pupils assessed through tasks or oral recall
	Feedback given to pupils