

# Some Strategies to Teach General English Vocabulary to Intermediate Students. A Case Study at Binh Thuan College

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## ABSTRACT

*This study aims to consider the distribution of multiple intelligences among students in order to apply some strategies to teach general English vocabulary to intermediate students of Binh Thuan College (BTC), Vietnam in academic year 2022-2023. The research participants were 35 students of BTC. Based on the data collected, there were 3 strong intelligences including Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence, Musical Intelligence, and Visual-Spatial Intelligence. Consequently, to teach vocabulary topics in 8 units of student's books like jobs, sports, free-time activities, places in a city, common adjectives, things in a house, food and drink, appearance, clothes and colors, vacation activities, vacation items, daily activities, personality adjectives, hobbies and interests, the researcher used realia as well as mime, action, and gesture with support of the games and songs as strategies to teach vocabulary through classroom activities concerned about music, physical movement, and visuals.*

## KEYWORDS

*multiple intelligences; teachers' strategie; vocabulary*

## INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary as one of English component is very significant to learn four English skills. Richard (2001) indicates that vocabulary is core component of listening, speaking, reading and writing. It also means that teaching 4 skills of speaking, writing, reading, and listening cannot be separated from teaching vocabulary. Cameron (2001) argues that words are important to develop students' skill and knowledge and building up a wide range of words to students is fundamental to the foreign language learning. Nunan (1991) states that the acquisition of an adequate vocabulary is essential for successful second language use. With an extensive vocabulary, students will be able to use the structures and functions for comprehensible communication. Vocabulary learning is essential to learn a language, including a foreign language (Alghamdi, A. A., & Elyas, T, 2020).

As a lecturer of English at BTC, a school in Phan Thiet city, Vietnam, the researcher would like to investigate intelligences of students to apply the adequate strategies in vocabulary teaching to enhance students' interest in learning English words. As a result, the study on teaching vocabulary entitled: "Some strategies to teach general English vocabulary to intermediate students. A case study at Binh Thuan College." was conducted to consider the distribution of intelligences in students and recommend some strategies in teaching English vocabulary to students at BTC.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Vocabulary**

Vocabulary is central to language and of critical importance to the typical language learning (Coady and Huckin, 1998). According to Brown (2011), vocabulary is classified into some types (i) Reading vocabulary is all the words readers can recognize when reading, (ii) Listening vocabulary is all the words listeners can recognize when listening to speech. This is vocabulary is aided in size by context and tone of voice, (iii) Writing vocabulary is all the words writers can employ in writing. The writing vocabulary is stimulated by its user, and (iv) Speaking vocabulary is all the words speakers can use in speech. Due to the spontaneous nature of the speaking vocabulary, words may be compensated by nonverbal language.

Brown (2000) regards vocabulary in 2 types, namely (i) receptive vocabulary is words that the learners recognize and understand when they are used in the context of reading and listening, but which they cannot produce when speaking and writing, and (ii) productive vocabulary is the words which the learners understand, can pronounce correctly and use constructively in speaking and writing. This sort of vocabulary can be addressed as an active process because the learners can produce the words to express their thought to others.

### **Vocabulary Teaching Strategy**

Hamruni (2009) regards strategy as a plan, method, or series of activities designed to achieve a particular educational goal. Teaching strategy is teaching activities done by teachers and students to reach the purpose of teaching effectively and efficiently.

Harmer (1991) suggest some strategies that teachers can use to help their students practice vocabulary consisting of (i) Realia means bringing the real objects into the classroom to teach words, (ii) Mime, Action, and Gesture to present words like “running” and “reading”, (iii) Contrast to teach pairs of opposites like “empty-full”, “cold-hot”, “big-small”. This technique gives solution to make easy to get the meaning of the word, (iv) Translation as a quick and easy way to present the meaning of words, and (v) Explanation which can be difficult for student to understand especially at beginner middle level. It is important to include explanation with information and context when the items can be used.

There exist many techniques to teach English vocabulary to students. Teachers should concern to the students learning style to decide the suitable teaching strategies. Kolb (1981) supposes that in classrooms, there are multiple learning styles among students, and to accommodate these learning styles, teachers should provide a variety of activities to meet the needs of different learning styles. Besides, Wallace (1982) recommends some principles that teachers should pay attention to when teaching vocabulary. They are the aims of teaching vocabulary, the quantity of vocabulary, the students need, frequent exploration and repetition, meaningful presentation, and situation presentation.

### **The Description of Eight Intelligences**

Following is the descriptions of 8 intelligences proposed by Gardner. All what Gardner desires to emphasize is the plurality of the intellect (Christison, 1998). Although each intelligence is separately described, it does not mean that each intelligence is active in isolation. Gardner suggests that it is common for different intelligences to be used together in a learning episode (Christison, 1998). These descriptions are from several sources (Christison & Kennedy, 1999; Gardner, 1999; Stefanakis, 2002; Smith, 2003, Tran, 2009).

Verbal-Linguistic Intelligence is the ability to use language in speaking and writing effectively, to understand patterns of a language, to remember information and to use

language to convince others. People who have a strong verbal-linguistic intelligence are fond of reading books and possess a wide range of vocabulary.

Logical-Mathematical Intelligence concerns about the ability to think of problems in logical and systematical manners, to use numbers effectively. People with this intelligence do well on standardized comprehension/written language tests. They enjoy recognizing abstract patterns, making predictions sequence, solving problems and investigating science.

Visual-Spatial Intelligence is the ability to visualize things in mental and graphical ways, and the sensitivity to shape, color, line, form and space. People with spatial intelligence like drawing a picture than writing a paragraph, and fancy solving problems related to the notion of space.

Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence is the ability to solve problems using the body and to express thoughts, ideas, and emotions through gestures and movements. People with Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence have an excellent body control and sense of touch, love physical movement rather than just sitting still, and are good at flexibility, strength, coordination and balance endurance.

Musical Intelligence is the ability to recognize and use pitch, rhythm, melody, and to convey sentiment and feelings through music. People with this intelligence can remember songs easily, play some music instruments and compose songs, have hobby of creating music from objects, and enjoy listening to music and usually hear music.

Interpersonal Intelligence is the ability to understand, to empathize with, and to care for people in an effective way. This intelligence involves the sensitivity to other people's moods, feelings, thoughts, and motivations. People possessing this intelligence can use an innate understanding of others to motivate them to certain actions.

Intrapersonal Intelligence is the ability to understand oneself and then regulate one's own life. It is also the capacity for self-analysis, self-reflection, self-awareness, self-consciousness and introspection. People with this intelligence can realize the similarities and differences between themselves and others.

Naturalist Intelligence is the ability to recognize, classify and categorize species in the natural world. Naturalist people can distinguish harmful species from beneficial ones, and seem to be absorbed in physical environment and natural phenomena.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

Research participants were 35 male students, from the class Air-conditioner Engineering of BTC in Phan Thiet City, Binh Thuan Province, Vietnam. All students had graduated from some secondary schools, ranging from 16 to 25 years old. They do not varied greatly in terms of the length of their English learning experience. The research was conducted from 1/11/2022 -20/3/2023.

In this study, questionnaire is used to gain insight into learners' multiple intelligences (MIs) since it is comparatively convenient and easily quantifies the data obtained (Kumar, 1996), and is also clearly a suitable instrument in the Vietnamese context, where learners do not get generally used to expressing their attitudes directly to others (Nguyen, 2010). A questionnaire on MIs was delivered to 35 learners in class Air-conditioner Engineering at the first periods of the course to see the distribution of learners' MIs, from which appropriate strategies would be applied to teach vocabulary. This questionnaire adapted from Christison (1996, 1999) and Lin (2000) includes 32 questions divided into eight dimensions as shown in the following table.

**Table 1.** Questionnaire Adapted from Christison (1996, 1999) and Lin (2000)

Dimensions	Questions
1. Verbal-Linguistic Intelligence	1, 9, 17, 25
2. Logical-Mathematical Intelligence	2, 10, 18, 26
3. Visual Spatial Intelligence	3, 11, 19, 27
4. Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence	4, 12, 20, 28
5. Musical Intelligence	5, 13, 21, 29
6. Interpersonal Intelligence	6, 14, 22, 30
7. Intrapersonal Intelligence	7, 15, 23, 31
8. Naturalist Intelligence	8, 16, 24, 32

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *Findings from the questionnaire survey on learners' MI*

Learner diversity can be seen through the distribution of learners' MIs which are clearly identified at the Table 2.

**Table 2.** Distribution of Learners' MIs

Areas of intelligences	Frequency	Percentage
1. Verbal-Linguistic Intelligence	56	10.1 %
2. Logical-Mathematical Intelligence	23	4.1 %
3. Visual Spatial Intelligence	120	21.6 %
4. Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence	131	23.6 %
5. Musical Intelligence	122	21.9%
6. Interpersonal Intelligence	21	3.8 %
7. Intrapersonal Intelligence	93	16.7 %
8. Naturalist Intelligence	19	3.4 %
<b>Total</b>	556	100 %

Based on the number of statements ticked in each intelligence, it is possible to have a learners' primary intelligence profile. It can be clearly seen from the data that the three intelligences which seem to be most highly developed by the whole class are bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, musical intelligence, and visual-spatial intelligence. The frequency for these intelligences are 131 (23.6 %), 122 (21.9%), and 120 (21.6 %) respectively. These are the maximum scores obtained by the class. The intelligence with rather high frequency is intrapersonal intelligence with 93 ticked statements, account for 16.7 %. It appears that students would like to work in pairs and groups to solve English tasks.

However, a small group of students is strong at other intelligences instead of showing specific strengths in those above intelligences. For example, 56 statements were chosen for verbal-linguistic (10.1 %), 23 for logical-mathematical (4.1 %) 1, and 21 for interpersonal (3.8 %). It can be supposed that students in this class do not fancy with tasks related to numbers or problem-solving individually. The lowest scores obtained by learners are registered in the area of naturalist intelligence with the total frequency is only 19 (3.4 %). It seems that students would not highly appreciate with the classroom activities related to nature.

### *The Strategies Used in Teaching Vocabulary*

According to students' MIs, the two techniques used frequently were teaching vocabulary through realia, mime, action, and gesture with games and songs. These strategies were conducted in group or team activities to meet students' intrapersonal intelligence. Because

these strategies matched students' MIs, they make students easier, faster, and more enjoyable to master vocabulary, and they really support students' vocabulary improvement.

Using realia, mime, action, and gesture with games and songs to teach vocabulary was an outstanding feature in this class. Students were attracted to activities and did not feel bored with the lesson. The students were taught with real things like fruits, colors. Students could understand or found the meaning of vocabulary based on the real objects, mime, action, and gesture. Through such word games, students could learn vocabulary in more joyful ways which increased their motivation to learn vocabulary. Besides, songs were often used in this class to teach words to students. Students were active and enjoy the lesson so much when memorizing new words in rhyming, or following the rhyme of a song and filling in the sentence blank.

### ***Some Classroom Activities***

In order to teach vocabulary topics in 8 units of student's books, the researcher used "objects and teaching props from the world outside the classroom that are used for teaching and learning" (Nunan, 1999). Words concerning about jobs, sports, things in a house, food and drink, clothes and colors, vacation items were presented and reviewed. Furthermore, vocabulary topics of jobs, sports, free-time activities, common adjectives, personality adjectives, hobbies and interests were taught through mime, action, and gesture. Besides, some songs like "Apple And Bananas", "The Ice Cream Song", "Do You Like Broccoli Ice Cream?", "Peanut Butter & Jelly", "The Muffin Man", "What do you want to drink" were used to teach the word topic food and drink, "Rainbow Colors Song" to teach color, "Big, Big, Big" to teach common adjectives, "What is he like?" to teach personality adjectives. Especially, some games were presented to teach words like the game *Chinese whispers race* was held to teach hobbies and interests, free-time activities, *In the chair* for vacation activities, daily activities, *Colors* for clothes and colors, *Let's count* for things in a house, jobs, *Picture dictation* for places in a city and appearance.

#### ***Chinese whispers race***

Before the lesson, write down about 15 sentences that include words, phrases, from the puzzle. To practice apple, for example, the sentence could be: "Do you like apples?"

Organize the class into two teams; each team stands in a line. Ask the students at the back of each line to come to the teacher. Then whisper a sentence to them. They return to the back of their respective team and whisper the sentence to the student in front of them. This student then whispers to the student next to them, and so on. Meanwhile, the teacher walks to the front of the lines. As soon as that sentence reaches the front of the line, the student at the front puts up his/her hand. The teacher waits until both teams have finished then ask the students who put up their hand first to say the sentence. If it is identical to the one the game started with, that team gets a point. If the sentence is not the same, ask the student at the front of the other team. If their sentence is correct, award them a point instead.

#### ***In The Chair***

The teacher makes a list of words that can be mimed. The teacher puts a chair in front of the board, organizes the class into two or three teams. The teacher gets a member of Team A to come and sit on the chair. He/she must not look around at the board, write three words on the board. The other members of Team A must mime the first word. When the student in front of the board guesses it (or gives up), they move on to the next word, and so on. The turn lasts for one minute. Team A would get one point for each word correctly guessed. Then it is Team B's turn, and so on.

### *Colors*

The teacher introduces and checks colors by pointing to things in the room and asking the class to shout out their colors. Hand out copies of the fruit puzzle. Students color the picture as directed. When it is colored, it will reveal a bowl of fruit.

Other technique is the teacher asks each student to choose five colors, and writes them down. The teacher calls out the name of a student in the class, for example, Mai. Students can cross off all the colors in their list that Mai is wearing. Then call out the name of another student, and so on. The first student to cross off all five of their colors is the winner. Repeat as required.

### *Let's count*

Teach the class the following British schoolchildren's action rhyme: "One potato, two potatoes, three potatoes, and four potatoes. Five potatoes, six potatoes, seven potatoes, and more. O. U.T. spells "out ", so out you must go. This is accompanied by an action: groups of up to six put out their right fists, one on top of the other to make a tower. With each word in bold in the rhyme, the person whose fist is at the bottom removes their fist and places it on top of the tower. At the end of the rhyme, the person whose fist is at the top of the pile is out. The remaining players repeat the rhyme until only one person is left, the winner. The teacher can replace "potato" with words related to things in the house or jobs.

### *Picture dictation*

The teacher describes some daily activities of a typical student for four teams of the class to draw. For example, he wakes up, does morning exercise, brushes his teeth, takes a bath, gets dressed, has breakfast, and goes to school. Then the representative of each team takes turns to give more activities. This game can be applied to learn words on the topics of places in a city and appearance.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

In order to introduce and practice all word topics in 8 units of student book such as jobs, things in a house, food and drink, clothes and colors, vacation items, sports, free-time activities, common adjectives, personality adjectives, hobbies and interests, daily activities vacation activities, places in a city, and appearance, realia, mime, action, gesture, songs, and games were applied after investigating students' MIs.

Because these strategies met students' MIs, they make students feel comfortable and enjoyable when learning. Students could not only understand but also memorize vocabulary in the unit. So, it is very important for the teacher to have different suitable vocabulary teaching strategies to ease students in mastering vocabulary in the most effective ways.

Although it is said that traditionally, the teaching of English in Vietnam is dominated by a teacher-centered, book-centered, this study proved that the individual was only preferred by a tiny number of students. This suggests that students showed a strong preference for more intrapersonal activities that enabled them to be involved in physical movement. Besides, they love musical and visual activities. It seems students are more and more adapting themselves to active learning. It is suggested that teachers should combine plentiful classroom activities together to make lessons more vivid and interesting. For instance, before organizing some games, teachers can give visual instructions or visual aids.

Because students have different ability, creativity, characteristics and interests, the teacher should understand what students need based on their differences to use suitable strategies in teaching vocabulary so that students can understand, remember and apply the words.

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## QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY ON MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES

Please read and choose the statement describing you by ticking (✓). You can choose as many of the statements.

*For example: If the statement describes you, you tick (✓) like the following example:*

*I like to read books, magazines, or newspapers.*

- 1. I like to read books, magazines, or newspapers.
- 2. I can do simple calculations easily in my head.
- 3. I can hum the tunes to many songs.
- 4. I can read maps easily.
- 5. It is hard for me to sit still for long periods of time.
- 6. I am often the leader in activities.
- 7. I prefer working alone to with others.
- 8. I like houseplants.
- 9. I often write down what I want to remember.
- 10. I am very good at chess or number games.
- 11. I can learn new songs easily.
- 12. I have vivid dreams.
- 13. It is easy for me to follow exactly what other people do.
- 14. My friends often talk to me about their problems.
- 15. I profoundly know my strong and weak points.
- 16. I would like to have a pet.
- 17. I can get acquainted with friends easily.
- 18. Math is my favorite subject in school.
- 19. I can tell when a musical note is off-key.
- 20. I am sensitive to color.
- 21. Only by practicing, can I learn a new skill.
- 22. I have many close friends.
- 23. I do not like being at places with many people.
- 24. I love natural programs on television.
- 25. I like to tell jokes.
- 26. I like to analyze things.
- 27. I cannot live in full joy without music.
- 28. I love books and magazines with many pictures.
- 29. I enjoy sports and other physical activities.
- 30. I enjoy taking part in social activities.
- 31. I learn from my mistakes.
- 32. I enjoy visiting the zoo.