STRATEGIES USED BY EIGHTH GRADERS

IN LEARNING ENGLISH VOCABULARY

A Thesis Submitted to the Department of English Education

in Partial Fulfilment for the Master's Degree in Education

Submitted by

Upendra Prasad Dhungel

Faculty of Education

Kathmandu Shiksha Campus

Ramshahapath, Kathmandu, Nepal

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RECOMMENDATION FOR ACCEPTANCE

This is to certify that **Mr. Upendra Prasad Dhungel** has prepared this thesis entitled **'Strategies Used by Eighth Graders in Learning English Vocabulary'** under my guidance and supervision.

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DEDICATION

Dedicated

to my parents and teachers

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT

The main purpose of the present study entitled **'Strategies Used by Eighth Graders in Learning English Vocabulary'** was to investigate the English vocabulary learning strategies employed by the high and low achievers of grade eight. The study was conducted with eighty students (40 high achievers and 40 low achievers) studying in grade eight in the public schools of Kathmandu district. The data for the study were collected through questionnaire and interview. A vocabulary learning strategy questionnaire designed following the likert method was administered to the students to gather the required information. A structured interview schedule was used for collecting data from the teachers. The finding of the study showed that the high achievers used a wider variety of vocabulary learning strategies than the low achievers.

This study consists of four chapters.Chapter one includes general background to the study, review of the related literature, objectives of the study, significance of the study and definitions of the specific terms. Chapter two deals with methodology used for the study which includes sources of data, population of the study, sample population, tools for data collection, process of data collection and limitations of the study. Similarly, chapter three incorporates analysis and interpretation of the data. Chapter four presents the findings of the study. It also suggests some pedagogical implications based on the findings.

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List of Abbreviations

Dr.	Doctor
M.Ed.	Master of Education
e.g.	For example
ELT	English Language Teaching
et.al.	and other people (Latin et alia)
etc	et cetera
i.e.	That is to say
L1	First language
L2	Second language
No.	Number
S.N.	Serial Number
T.U.	Tribhuvan University
viz.	Namely (Latin-Videlicet)

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1   General Background

Language is a systematic means of communicating ideas, feelings or thoughts by the use of conventional sounds or symbols. It is the most valuable possession of human beings which distinguishes them from animals. Hall (1968, as cited in Lyons, 1981, p. 4) defines language as "the institution whereby humans communicate and interact with each other by means of habitually used oral-auditory arbitrary symbols." Similarly, Wardhaugh (1972, as cited in Brown, 1994, p. 4) states: "Language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols used for human communication." Thus, language is the system of sounds or symbols used by humans to express their thoughts and feelings. It is the most fundamental means of human communication.

Among many languages spoken in the world today, English is by far the most widely studied and used language. As Crystal (1997, p. 61) points out: "There has never been a language so widely spread or spoken by so many people as English." The English language has, thus, established itself as the most influential language of international communication. That is why, English is sometimes aptly described as a global language or a world language. It is used as a lingua franca to facilitate communication among the speakers of different languages.

English is the dominant language in mass media, academia, science and technology, medicine, international business, diplomacy and so on. Therefore, a working knowledge of English has become a requirement in almost all fields.

Teaching and learning of English started in Nepal more than one and a half century ago. Currently it is taught as a compulsory subject from primary to bachelor level. In this modern era of globalization, the importance of teaching and learning English in a developing country like Nepal can hardly be exaggerated.

Learning a foreign language involves learning different aspects of that language. Vocabulary is one such vitally important aspect which forms the 'core' of a language. The section that follows deals with that vital aspect of a language.

1.1.1 Vocabulary

Simply put, vocabulary refers to the total number of words that make up a language. In other words, all the words in a particular language constitute the vocabulary of that language. Richards et al. (1985, p. 307) define vocabulary as "a set of lexemes, including single words, compound words and idioms." Similarly, Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1983, p. 29) view vocabulary as "comprising not only single words but also compounds and conventionalized multiword forms." Similarly, Ur (1996, p. 6) states: "Vocabulary can be defined, roughly, as the words we teach in the foreign language." Clarifying the meaning/concept of vocabulary, she further says:

> However, a new item of vocabulary may be more than a single word: for example, *post office* and *mother-in-law*, which are made up of two or three words but express a single idea. There are also multi-word idioms such as *call it a day*, where the meaning of the phrase cannot be deduced from an analysis of the component words. (ibid)

Such confusion as in the above cases, Ur suggests, can be avoided by using the terms 'vocabulary items' rather than 'words' (ibid).

From the above definitions, it is clear that the term vocabulary includes not only single words but also compound words, phrases and idioms, which, like single words, express a single idea. Vocabulary is sometimes referred to as lexis or lexicon.

The English language has a very large vocabulary, perhaps larger than the vocabulary of any other language in the world. The number of English words recorded in the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary is more than half a million. English vocabulary has remarkable flexibility and adaptability. In English, we can often express the same meaning in different words.

From a different perspective, vocabulary is defined as a language user's knowledge of words. In this sense, vocabulary refers to the set of all words that a person understands or is able to use. A distinction is often made between active and passive vocabulary: this is dealt with below.

1.1.1.1 Active and Passive Vocabulary

In general, vocabulary can be classified into two types, viz. active vocabulary and passive vocabulary. Harmer (1991, p. 159) states:

> Active vocabulary refers to vocabulary that students have been taught or learnt – and which they are expected to be able to use – whilst passive vocabulary refers to words which the students will recognize when they meet them but which they will probably not be able to produce.

Similarly, Cross (1992, p. 15) says: "Words that are internalized and can readily be produced are said to be in the student's active vocabulary. Words that they could not readily produce, but would understand, are said to be in their passive vocabulary." Thus, active vocabulary refers to the words that learners understand and also use themselves. In other words, the words that learners understand and use constructively in their speech and writing constitute their active vocabulary. Active vocabulary is also called productive vocabulary.

Passive vocabulary, on the other hand, refers to the words which learners understand, but do not themselves use. Hence, the words which learners recognize or understand when they see or hear them, but which they do not use yet form their passive vocabulary. Passive vocabulary is also called receptive vocabulary.

A learner's passive vocabulary is typically larger than his active vocabulary. To put it another way, a learner is usually able to recognize or understand many more words than he can produce. However, the active and passive vocabulary of a learner changes constantly because whether or not a word belongs to a passive or active vocabulary is not the characteristic of the word itself, but depends upon the learner who possesses it. A word that has been 'active' through constant use may slip back into the passive store if it is not frequently used. A word that learners have in their 'passive' store may suddenly become active if the situation or the context provokes its use.

1.1.1.2 Content Words and Function Words

Content words are the words which have stateable lexical meaning. Richards et al. (1985, p. 61) define content words as "the words which refer to a thing, quality, state or action and have meaning when they are used alone." Content words include nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs. For instance, *school, run, beautiful,*

happily, etc. are content words. Content words are also called lexical words or full words.

Function words, on the other hand, are the words which have almost no meaning of their own. "Function words have little meaning of their own, they show grammatical relationship in and between sentences"(ibid). Function words include articles, prepositions, conjunctions, pronouns, auxiliaries, etc. For example, *the, to, may, and, he,* etc. are function words. Function words are also called grammatical words or structure words or empty words.

1.1.2 Importance of Vocabulary

Vocabulary is one of the most important aspects of a language. In order to communicate effectively in a language, a good knowledge of the vocabulary of that language is essential. If one wishes to express some idea or ask something in a language, he/she must be able to produce appropriate words to convey his/her meaning. That is why, it is often remarked that learning a foreign language is basically a matter of learning the vocabulary of that language.

Highlighting the importance of vocabulary, Harmer (1991, p. 153) states: "If language structures make up the skeleton of language, then it is vocabulary that provides vital organs and flesh." He further argues: "An ability to manipulate grammatical structure does not have any potential for expressing meaning unless words are used." Similarly, Wilkins (1972, p. 111) observes: "Without grammar very little can be conveyed; without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed."

A good store of words is crucial for us to express ourselves more clearly and appropriately in a wide range of situations. Wallace (1982, p. 9) aptly remarks:

"Not being able to find the words you need to express yourself is the most frustrating experience in speaking another language."

Vocabulary is basic to all the four language skills, viz. listening, speaking, reading and writing. Every skill presupposes the knowledge of some vocabulary. The more words we know, the more we will be able to understand what we hear or read; and the better we will be able to say what we want to when speaking or writing. Therefore, learning vocabulary is an indispensable part of learning a language.

1.1.3 Aspects of Learning a Word

Learning a word involves learning different aspects of that word. To be specific, knowing a word means not just knowing the meaning of that word, but also knowing its several other aspects like how the word is spelt and pronounced; what words it is usually associated with; whether it has any particular grammatical characteristics and so on. As Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) point out:

> It is not sufficient simply to know many lexical items and their general meanings. For each item, non-native speakers must master a network of information about its form, meaning, and use if they wish to use the item accurately, meaningfully, and appropriately. (p. 46)

According to Wallace (1982, p. 27), to know a word in a target language as well as the native speaker knows it means the ability to:

a) recognize the word in its spoken or written form;
b) recall it at will;
c) relate it to an appropriate object or concept;

d) use it in the appropriate grammatical form;

e) in speech, pronounce it in a recognizable way;

f) in writing, spell it correctly;

g) use it with the words it correctly goes with, i.e. in the correct collocation;

h) use it at the appropriate level of formality;

i) be aware of its connotations and associations.

Harmer (1991, p. 158) presents the following four aspects of learning a word:

1.1.3.1 Word meaning

Vocabulary items frequently have more than one meaning. We know that 'table' means a thing with legs which we can sit on and eat off and that 'book' is a collection of words between covers. But the *Cambridge International Dictionary of English* lists three main meanings for 'table' and four main meanings for 'book' - let alone the large number of different phrases the words appear in where their meaning is subtly different. The point is that the same word can have many different meanings according to the context it is used in. So, it is very important for learners to understand the importance of *meaning in context*.

There are other facts about meaning too. Sometimes words have meanings in relation to other words - sense relations. More specifically, words have opposites (antonyms) and they also have words with similar meanings (synonyms). We understand the meaning of some words in the context of others. For instance, the meaning of 'full' is understood in the context of 'empty' (antonyms). Similarly, 'bad' and 'evil' have similar meaning (synonyms).

1.1.3.2   Word use

What a word means can be changed, stretched or limited by how it is used. Word meaning is frequently stretched through the use of metaphor and idiom. The word 'hiss', for example, describes the noise that snakes make. But its meaning can be stretched to describe the way people talk to each other ("Don't move or you're dead," she hissed.). That is metaphorical use. Similarly, in the sentence "He's a real snake in the grass." the underlined fixed phrase (idiom) refers to a treacherous person. Other examples of such idioms include 'raining cats and dogs', 'putting the cat among the pigeons', 'kick the bucket', etc.

Word meaning is also governed by collocation - that is, which words go together. It is immediately apparent that while some words can co-occur, others cannot. We can have a headache, stomachache or earache, but we cannot have a throatache or legache. In the same way, 'fast asleep' is an acceptable collocation, but 'fast awake' is not. Similarly, our use of words is also governed by the *style* or *register* we are in.

1.1.3.3   Word formation

Words can change their shape and their grammatical value, too. Learners need to know facts about word formation and how to twist words to fit different grammatical contexts. Thus, the verb 'run' has the participles 'running' and 'ran'. The present participle 'running' can be used as an adjective and 'run' can also be a noun. There is a clear relationship between the words 'death', 'dead', 'dying' and 'die'.

Learners need to know how suffixes and prefixes work. How can we make the words 'potent' and 'expensive' opposite in meaning? Why do we preface one with *im-* and the other with *in-*?

Learners also need to know how words are spelt and how they sound. Indeed the way words are stressed (and the way that stress can change when their grammatical function is different - as with the nouns and verbs, for example) is vital if learners are to be able to understand and use words in speech. Part of learning a word is learning its written and spoken form. Word formation, then, means knowing how words are written and spoken and knowing how they can change form.

1.1.3.4 Word grammar

Certain words can trigger the use of certain grammatical patterns. For instance, we make a distinction between countable and uncountable nouns. The former can be both singular and plural. We can say 'one chair' or 'two chairs'. The latter can only be singular; we cannot say 'two furnitures'. This difference, then, has certain grammatical implications. 'Chair' can collocate with plural verbs (provided that it is pluralized) whereas 'furniture' never can. There are also nouns that are neither countable nor uncountable but which have a fixed form and therefore collocate only with singular or plural verbs, e.g. 'people', 'the news', 'mathematics', etc.

Verbs trigger certain grammar too. 'Tell' is followed by an object + to +infinitive, for example, and so is 'ask'. But 'say' does not work in the same way. Knowing modal verbs like 'can', 'must', etc. means also knowing that these verbs are followed by a bare infinitive.

Students should also know what phrasal verbs are and how they behave. They should know how adjectives are ordered, what position adverbs can be used in.

Harmer (1991, p. 158) summarizes the aspects of knowing a word in the following way:

		Meaning in context
	MEANING	Sense relations
		Metaphor and idiom
	WORD USE	Collocation
WORDS		Style and register
		Parts of speech
	WORD FORMATION	Prefixes and suffixes
		Spelling and pronunciation
		Nouns: countable and uncountable, etc.
	WORD GRAMMAR	Verb complementation, phrasal verbs, etc.
		Adjectives and adverbs: position, etc.
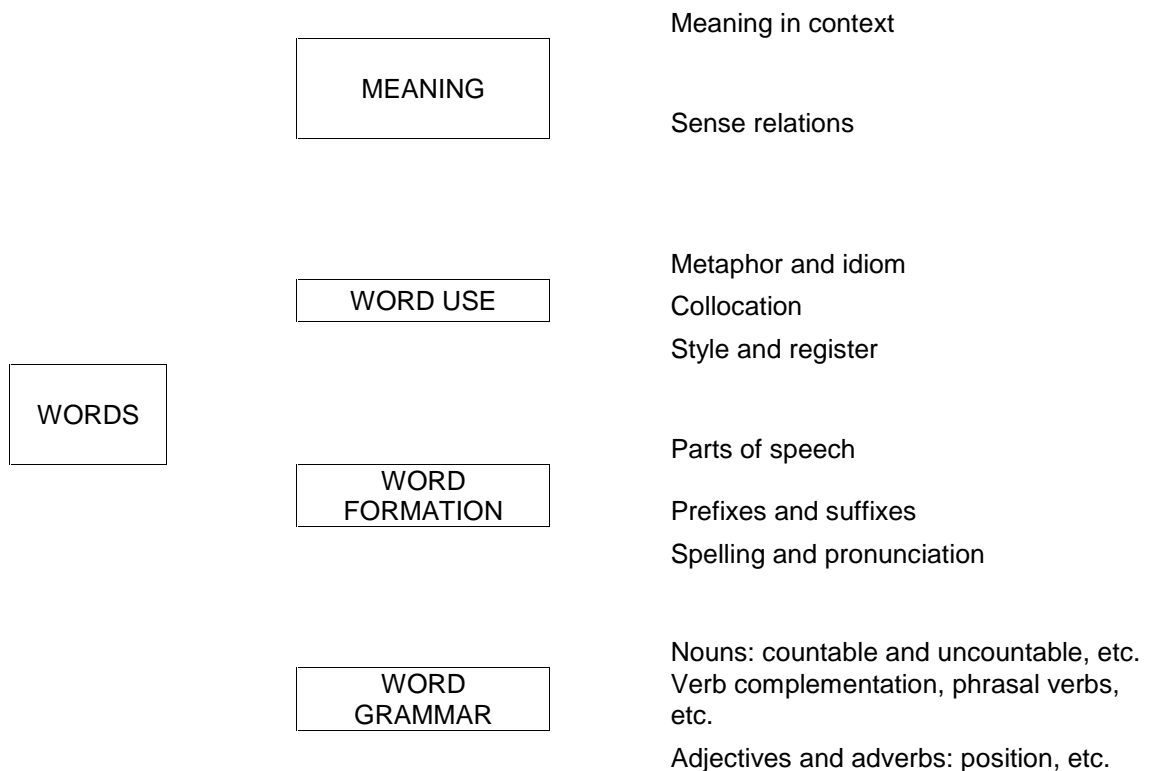
1.1.4 Learning Strategies

Learning strategies are specific actions, steps, or techniques learners use – often consciously – to facilitate their own learning. Thus, learning strategies are any specific behaviors or thoughts in which a learner engages and which are intended

to enhance knowledge integration and retrieval. Learning strategies help learners take charge of their own learning.

Rubin (1975, as cited in Larsen-Freeman, 2000, p.159) defines learning strategies as "the techniques or devices which a learner may use to acquire knowledge." O'Malley and Chamot (1990, p. 1) note: "Learning strategies are special behaviors or thoughts a learner uses to help himself comprehend, learn, or retain new information." Similarly, Cohen (1998, p. 4) views learning strategies as "conscious thoughts and behaviors used by learners with the explicit goal of improving their knowledge and understanding of the target language."

To Oxford (1990), learning strategies are particular actions employed by learners to make their learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more direct, more effective and more transferable to new situations. Richards et al. (1999, p. 208) state: "Learning strategy is a way in which a learner attempts to work out the meaning and use of words, grammatical rules and other aspects of language."

According to Brown (1994, p. 104): "Strategies are specific methods of approaching a problem or task, modes of operation for achieving a particular end." He distinguishes between two types of strategy: learning strategies and communication strategies. Learning strategies relate to input – to processing, storage, and retrieval, that is, to taking in messages from others. Communication strategies pertain to output, how learners productively express meaning, how they deliver messages to others (p. 114).

Ellis (1985, p. 165) says: "Learning strategies account for how the learner accumulates new L2 rules and automatizes existing ones by attending to input and by simplifying through the use of existing knowledge." Similarly, Ellis (1997, pp. 76-77) notes: "Learning strategies are the particular approaches or techniques that

learners use to try to learn an L2. They can be behavioral or mental." He points out that learning strategies are typically problem-oriented, that is, learners employ learning strategies when they are faced with some problem, such as how to remember a new word.

Thus, learning strategies are a series of specific actions a learner takes-often consciously- to facilitate the completion of a learning task. Learning strategies facilitate the acquisition, manipulation, integration, storage and retrieval of information across situations and settings. They help learners understand and learn new material or skills, integrate this new information with what they already know, and recall the information or skill later. Some examples of learning strategies are rehearsing, summarizing, paraphrasing, elaborating, outlining, guessing from context, self-monitoring, etc.

1.1.4.1 Types of Learning Strategy

Learning strategies have been categorized in various ways. Typically, they can be divided into three main categories: metacognitive, cognitive and socioaffective (O'Malley and Chamot, 1985, as cited in Brown, 1994, pp. 116-117).

i)   Metacognitive Strategies

Metacognition is the awareness of the process of learning. Hence, metacognitive strategies involve planning for learning, thinking about the learning process as it is taking place, monitoring of one's production or comprehension, and evaluating learning after an activity is completed. Metacognitive strategies include the strategies like directed attention, self-monitoring, delayed production, self-evaluation, etc.

ii) Cognitive Strategies

Cognitive strategies are more limited to specific learning tasks and involve more direct manipulation of the learning material itself. Thus, these strategies assist learners with processing and manipulating information. Cognitive strategies include paraphrasing, note-taking, translating, elaborating, guessing from context, etc.

iii) Socio-affective Strategies

Socio-affective strategies have to do with social-mediating activity and transacting with others. They include the actions which learners take to interact with other learners, teachers or native speakers. Examples of socio-affective strategies are working with peers, asking questions, asking for clarification, etc.

Oxford (1990, pp. 14-15) presents a more comprehensive classification of learning strategies. Her taxonomy distinguishes between direct and indirect strategies. The first category works with the language itself in a variety of specific tasks and situations. It is subdivided into memory, cognitive and compensation strategies. The second category has to do with general management of learning. This category is subdivided into metacognitive, affective and social strategies (p. 14).

Oxford's classification of learning strategies is summarized below.

a) Direct strategies

Direct strategies are divided into the following three sucategories:

i)   Memory strategies

The memory strategies include:

     - Creating mental linkages, e.g. grouping, associating, elaborating, etc.

- Applying images or sounds, e.g. using imagery, semantic mapping, using keywords, etc.

- Structured reviewing

- Employing action, e.g. using physical response or sensation

ii)   Cognitive strategies

The cognitive strategies include:

- Practising, e.g. repeating, recombining, using formulas or patterns, etc.

- Receiving and sending messages, e.g. getting the idea quickly, using resources, etc.

- Analyzing and reasoning, e.g. reasoning deductively, analyzing expressions, translating, etc.

- Taking notes and summarizing

iii)   Compensation strategies

The compensation strategies include:

- Guessing intelligently, e.g. using linguistic and other clues

- Overcoming limitations in speaking and writing, e.g. switching to mother tongue, getting help, using mime or gesture, using a circumlocution, adjusting the message, etc.

b)   Indirect strategies

Indirect strategies are also divided into the following three subcategories:

i)   Metacognitive strategies

The metacognitive strategies include:

- Centering your learning, e.g. overviewing, paying attention, etc.

- Arranging and planning your learning, e.g. organizing, setting goals, identifying the purpose, etc.

- Evaluating your learning, e.g. self-monitoring and self-evaluating.

ii)   Affective strategies

The affective strategies include:

- Lowering your anxiety, e.g. using progressive relaxation, using music, using laughter, etc.

- Encouraging yourself, e.g. making positive comments, rewarding yourself, etc.

- Taking your emotional temperature, e.g. using a checklist, writing a language learning diary, discussing feelings, etc.

iii)   Social strategies

The social strategies include:

- Asking questions, e.g. asking for clarification and asking for correction

- Co-operating with others, e.g. working with peers

- Empathizing with others, e.g. developing cultural understanding

1.1.5 Vocabulary Learning Strategies

Vocabulary learning strategies are the strategies learners employ to develop their L2 vocabulary. In other words, vocabulary learning strategies are the specific actions or techniques learners use to help themselves understand and remember L2

vocabulary. Learners employ a variety of strategies to cope with new L2 vocabulary.

Naiman et al. and Picket (1978, as cited in Ellis, 1985, p. 103) identify the following vocabulary learning strategies frequently used by learners:

   i.   Preparing and memorizing vocabulary lists

  ii.   Learning words in context

 iii.   Practising vocabulary

Hatch and Brown (1995, p. 373) mention five essential steps of vocabulary learning strategies. These steps are:

   i.   Having sources for encountering new words;

  ii.   Getting a clear image, whether visual or auditory or both, for the forms of the new words;

 iii.   Learning the meaning of the words;

  iv.   Making a strong memory connection between the forms and meanings of the words;

   v.   Using the words.

Schmitt (1997, pp. 207-208) presents a more comprehensive inventory of vocabulary learning strategies. His classification is based on Oxford's (1990) taxonomy of language learning strategies. Schmitt classifies the strategies into two groups, discovery strategies and consolidation strategies. Discovery strategies are the strategies learners use to discover the meaning of new words encountered for the first time. Discovery strategies include guessing or lexical inferencing, analysis of word features, use of dictionary, and asking other people. On the other hand,

consolidation strategies are the strategies that learners use to commit the words encountered to memory. These strategies include association, semantic processing, key word method and repetition strategies.

A detailed inventory of Schmitt's vocabulary learning strategies is given below:

i)   Discovery strategies

Different categories and subcategories of the discovery are as follows:

Strategy group	Strategies
Determination	ʃ Analyzing part of speech ʃ Analyzing affixes and roots ʃ Analyzing any available pictures or gestures ʃ Guessing meaning from textual context ʃ Using a dictionary (bilingual or monolingual)
Social	ʃ Ask a teacher for synonym, paraphrase, or L1 translation of new word ʃ Ask classmates for meaning

ii)   Consolidation strategies

Different categories and subcategories of the consolidation strategies are as follows:

Strategy group	Strategies
Social	ʃ Study and practise meaning in a group ʃ Interact with speakers
Memory	ʃ Connect word to a previous personal experience ʃ Associate the word with its co-ordinate ʃ Use semantic maps ʃ Image word forms ʃ Use key word method ʃ Group words together to study them ʃ Study the spelling of a word ʃ Say new word aloud when studying ʃ Use physical action when learning a word
Cognitive	ʃ Verbal repetition ʃ Written repetition ʃ Word lists ʃ Put English labels on physical objects ʃ Keep a vocabulary notebook
Metacognitive	ʃ Use English language media (songs, movies, news, etc.) ʃ Use spaced word practice (expanding rehearsal) ʃ Test oneself with word lists ʃ Skip or pass new word ʃ Continue to study word over time

Source: Schmitt (1997, pp. 207-208)

1.1.6 Learning Strategy Training

Learning strategy training means training learners in the use of different learning strategies in order to improve their learning effectiveness. In other words, learning strategy training is 'teaching learners how to learn'. Learning strategy training is very important in foreign language teaching. Learning will be more effective when learners are actively involved in the learning process. Learning will be facilitated by making learners aware of the range of learning strategies from which they can choose during language learning and use.

Language learners are more actively responsible for their own learning. Wenden (1985, as cited in Brown, 1994, p. 124) asserts that learner strategies are the key to learner autonomy, and that one of the most important goals of language training should be facilitating of that autonomy. Wenden (1985, as cited in Larsen-Freeman, 2000, p. 159), therefore, argues that language teachers' time might be profitably spent in learner training, as much as in language training.

A good knowledge of different learning strategies and the ability to apply them in appropriate situations might considerably simplify the learning of new vocabulary for learners. Equipped with a wide range of different vocabulary learning strategies, learners can readily decide upon how exactly they would like to deal with unknown words.

1.2 Review of the Related Literature

A number of researches have been carried out on language learning strategies, particularly vocabulary learning strategies at several universities abroad. However, only a few researches have been conducted on language learning strategies under the Department of English Education, Tribhuvan University.

O'Malley and Chamot (1990) carried out a research on the use of vocabulary learning strategies by more successful and less successful students. Their study found that more successful students used a greater variety of strategies and used them in ways that helped them complete the learning task successfully. By contrast, less successful students not only had fewer strategy types in their repertoires but also frequently used the strategies that did not lead to successful task completion.

Similarly, Schmitt (1997) conducted a research on the relationships between strategy use and perceived usefulness of these strategies with six hundred Japanese students. The results showed that the most commonly used strategies were using a bilingual dictionary, using a written repetition, using a verbal repetition, saying a new word aloud and taking notes in class. Of those reported strategies, the students considered dictionary and repetition strategies more useful and imagery and semantic grouping strategies the least useful.

Likewise, Kudos (1999) carried out a research entitled 'Vocabulary Learning Strategies Employed by Japanese Senior High School Students'. The study showed that the strategy most frequently used by the learners was rote learning, and the strategies less commonly used were those that involved deeper cognitive processing, such as the key word technique and semantic mapping.

In the same way, Devkota (2003) conducted a research entitled 'Learning Strategies: An Attitudinal Study' to find out the learning strategies employed by B.Ed. students specializing in English in studying literary texts. The findings of his study are that while studying literary texts students immediately note down the difficult words and consult dictionary and translate the words into their L1 only in some cases.

Similarly, Rain (2006) in his study entitled 'Learning Strategies Used by Maithili Learners of English at Secondary Level' found that the learners learned new English words by translating them into Nepali, consulting dictionary, through synonyms and antonyms, and memorizing the meaning.

Likewise, Shrestha (2007) carried out a research entitled 'Strategies Adopted by Tenth Graders in Learning English Vocabulary'. He found that the strategies that were most frequently used by the students to learn English vocabulary were learning the words by heart, keeping a vocabulary notebook, asking the teacher to translate into Nepali, noting down the word meanings during the teacher's explanation, using glossary of the book and using a bilingual dictionary.

Many researches have been carried out under the Department of English Education in different areas like error analysis, textbook analysis, contrastive analysis, English language teaching methods and techniques, and so on. But very few researches have been conducted on language learning strategies, and they too have not investigated the English vocabulary learning strategies employed by lower secondary level students. Hence, this study is different from the previous researches.

1.3   Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were as follows:

a) To find out the general pattern of English vocabulary learning strategies used by the high and low achievers of grade eight.
b) To identify the most commonly used vocabulary learning strategies by the high and low achievers.
c) To suggest some pedagogical implications.

1.4   Significance of the Study

This study will shed some light on the strategies employed by learners in learning English vocabulary. So, it is intended that this will enhance the English language teachers' understanding of the vocabulary acquisition among the learners so that adjustments can be made to vocabulary teaching as well as strategy training. Similarly, syllabus designers and textbook writers will also be benefited by the study. The study will be useful to the prospective researchers who wish to carry out research in the field of vocabulary learning strategies. Overall, all the people who are directly or indirectly involved in teaching and learning English may find the study valuable.

1.5   Definitions of the Specific Terms

The following terms have been used in specific way in this thesis:

Strategy: It refers to the particular actions employed by learners to make their learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more direct, more effective and more transferable to new situations.

Students: This term refers to the students of grade eight studying in different public schools of Kathmandu district.

Teachers: This term refers to the teachers teaching English in grade eight in the public schools of Kathmandu district.

Target language: This term refers to the English language.

High achievers: This term refers to the students scoring 70% and above in English in the final examination of grade seven.

Low achievers: This term refers to the students scoring 50% and less in English in the final examination of grade seven.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

The researcher adopted the following methodology for the study.

2.1   Sources of Data

The researcher used both primary and secondary sources of data.

2.1.1   Primary Sources

The primary sources of data for the study were the eighth graders of the public schools of Kathmandu district.

2.1.2   Secondary Sources

The secondary sources of data for the study included various books, journals, articles, theses, websites, etc which were related to the area of study. Some of them were Brown (1994), Ellis (1985), Harmer (1991), Oxford (1990), Wallace (1982), etc.

2.2   Population of the Study

The population of the study consisted of the students studying in grade eight in the public schools of Kathmandu district.

2.3   Sample Population and Sampling Procedure

The sample population of the study consisted of eighty students (40 high achievers and 40 low achievers) from the ten purposively selected public schools of Kathmandu district. Eight students with equal number of high and low achievers were selected from each school using simple random sampling procedure. High achievers and low achievers were determined on the basis of their scores in English in the final examination of grade seven as obtained from school records. Those scoring 70% and above were considered the high

achievers and those scoring 50% and less were considered the low achievers. Besides, ten teachers, one from each school, teaching English in grade eight were also included in the study as informants.

2.4   Tools for Data Collection

The researcher used questionnaire and structured interview schedule to elicit the required information from the sample population. A set of questionnaire was prepared to find out the strategies used by the students in learning English vocabulary, and an interview schedule was prepared for the teachers teaching English in grade eight.

2.5   Process of Data Collection

The researcher first prepared the questionnaire and the interview schedule. Then, he visited the purposely selected schools and sought permission from the school administration to administer the questionnaire to the randomly selected students. He clearly explained to the students what they were supposed to do and administered the questionnaire. Then, the researcher requested the teachers teaching English in grade eight for interview and collected the required information.

2.6   Limitations of the Study

The study had the following limitations:

   i.   The study was limited to the strategies used by eighth graders in learning English vocabulary.
   ii.   The study was limited only to ten public schools of Kathmandu district.
   iii. Only eighty students were included in the study.
   iv.   The data for the study were collected only through questionnaire and interview.

CHAPTER THREE

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

This chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of the data. The data are analyzed and interpreted in two sections. In the first section, an attempt is made to see the general pattern of strategy use among 40 high achievers and the same number of low achievers. The second section tries to identify the most commonly used vocabulary learning strategies by the high and low achievers. Moreover, a separate analysis is done on the data collected through interviews with teachers.

3.1   General Pattern of Strategy Used by the High and Low Achievers

There were twenty-five items in the questionnaire, each item describing a different vocabulary learning strategy. Eighty students (40 high achievers and 40 low achievers) were asked to indicate how often they use the strategies to learn English vocabulary. The distribution of students' responses about the use of each strategy is presented in the tables below followed by descriptive analysis of the responses.

3.1.1 Guess meaning from the context

The distribution of students' responses about the use of guessing strategy is presented below:

Table No. 1

Guess meaning from the context

SN	Item	High Achievers=40					Low Achievers=40				
		Frequency of responses					Frequency of responses				
		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
1.	Guess meaning from the context	-	1	4	29	6	10	15	11	2	2

The above table shows that a considerable number of high achievers tend to guess the meaning of new words from the textual context. Twenty-nine of the high achievers stated that they 'always' guess the meaning of a new word from the context in which it has been used and six of them reported that they 'frequently' employ this strategy. However, the low achievers seem to be largely ignorant of this strategy. Only two of the low achievers answered that they 'always' use this strategy and two of them said that they 'frequently' use it. Ten of the low achievers 'never' use the guessing strategy and fifteen of them 'rarely' use it.

3.1.2 Use a monolingual dictionary

The distribution of students' responses about the use of a monolingual dictionary is presented below:

Table No. 2

Use a monolingual dictionary

SN	Item	High Achievers=40					Low Achievers=40				
		Frequency of responses					Frequency of responses				
		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
2.	Use a monolingual dictionary	-	4	10	20	6	16	10	10	4	-

As the table above demonstrates, the majority of the high achievers use a monolingual dictionary (i.e. English-English dictionary) to learn the meaning of new words. Twenty and six of the high achievers stated respectively that they 'always' and 'frequently' use monolingual dictionary while only four of the low achievers reported that they 'frequently' use it. Sixteen of the low achievers said that they 'never' use monolingual dictionary; eleven of them stated they 'rarely' use it; and nine of them said that they use it only 'sometimes'.

3.1.3 Use a bilingual dictionary

The distribution of students' responses about the use of a bilingual dictionary is presented below:

Table No. 3

Use a bilingual dictionary

SN	Item	High Achievers=40					Low Achievers=40				
		Frequency of responses					Frequency of responses				
		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
3.	Use a bilingual dictionary	9	10	13	8	-	-	-	2	6	32

As the above table shows, almost all of the low achievers (38 of them) rely solely on a bilingual dictionary (i.e. English-Nepali dictionary). The high achievers, by contrast, give little preference to it. Nine of the high achievers said that they 'never' use bilingual dictionary; ten of them stated that they 'rarely' use it; and thirteen of them reported that they use it 'sometimes'. Only eight of the high achievers answered that they 'frequently' use a bilingual dictionary.

3.1.4 Ask teacher for a paraphrase or synonym

The distribution of students' responses about the strategy of asking teacher for a paraphrase or synonym is presented below:

Table No. 4

Ask teacher for paraphrase or synonym

SN	Item	High Achievers=40					Low Achievers=40				
		Frequency of responses					Frequency of responses				
		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
4.	Ask teacher for a paraphrase or synonym	-	1	4	28	7	7	10	13	6	4

As the above table reveals, a substantial number of high achievers (35 of them) ask their teacher for a paraphrase or synonym of a new word in the target language. However, only a few low achievers employ this strategy. Six and four of the low achievers answered respectively that they 'frequently' and 'always' use this strategy. Seven of them said that they 'never' use it; ten of them stated they 'rarely' use it; and thirteen of them said that they 'sometimes' use it.

3.1.5 Ask friends

The distribution of students' responses about the strategy of asking friends is presented below:

Table No. 5

Ask friends

SN	Item	High Achievers=40					Low Achievers=40				
		Frequency of responses					Frequency of responses				
		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
5.	Ask friends to explain the meaning of new words	5	8	10	12	5	2	5	8	15	10

The table above demonstrates that the low achievers are seen to use the strategy of asking friends to explain the meaning of new words more than the high achievers. While twelve of the high achievers make use of this strategy 'frequently' and five of them 'always', fifteen and ten of the low achievers employ it 'frequently' and 'always' respectively. Similarly, five of the high achievers 'never' use it and eight of them use it 'rarely'; two of the low achievers 'never' use it and five of them use it 'rarely'.

3.1.6 Ask teacher for translation

The distribution of students' responses about the strategy of asking teacher for translation is presented below:

Table No. 6

Ask teacher for translation

SN	Item	High Achievers=40					Low Achievers=40				
		Frequency of responses					Frequency of responses				
		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
6.	Ask teacher to translate into Nepali	5	12	16	6	1	2	4	7	11	16

As indicated in the above table, most of the low achievers ask their teacher to translate a new English word into Nepali. By contrast, few high achievers do so. Sixteen of the low achievers reported that they 'always' ask their teacher to translate new English words into Nepali; eleven of them stated that they 'frequently' employ this strategy; and six of them said that they 'rarely' or 'never' use this strategy. On the other hand, only one of the high achievers answered that he/she 'always' uses this strategy; six of them said that they 'frequently' use this strategy; sixteen of them said that they use it only 'sometimes'; and seventeen of them stated that they 'rarely' or 'never' use this strategy.

3.1.7 Use glossary of the book

The distribution of students' responses about the strategy of using glossary of the book is presented below:

Table No. 7

Use glossary of the book

SN	Item	High Achievers=40					Low Achievers=40				
		Frequency of responses					Frequency of responses				
		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
7.	Use glossary of the book	-	1	5	9	25	5	8	18	5	4

As the table above depicts, a considerable number of high achievers learn the meaning of new words from the glossary of their book. Twenty-five of the high achievers responded that they 'always' use this strategy. However, only five and four of the low achievers stated respectively that they 'frequently' and 'always' learn the meaning of new words from the glossary of their book. Five of the low achievers answered that they 'never' employ this strategy and eight of them said that they 'rarely' use it.

3.1.8 Keep a vocabulary notebook

The distribution of students' responses about the strategy of keeping a vocabulary notebook is presented below:

Table No. 8

Keep a vocabulary notebook

SN	Item	High Achievers=40					Low Achievers=40				
		Frequency of responses					Frequency of responses				
		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
8.	Keep a vocabulary notebook	14	16	8	2	-	28	8	3	-	-

The above table shows that both high and low achievers do not seem to adopt the strategy of keeping a vocabulary notebook. Only two of the high achievers answered that they 'frequently' keep a vocabulary notebook and eight of them said that they use this strategy only 'sometimes'. Almost none of the low achievers make use of this strategy.

3.1.9 Learn meaning by definitions

The distribution of students' responses about the strategy of learning meaning by definitions is presented below:

Table No. 9

Learn meaning by definitions

SN	Item	High Achievers=40					Low Achievers=40				
		Frequency of responses					Frequency of responses				
		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
9.	Learn meaning by definitions	-	2	8	16	14	2	2	10	13	13

As the above table displays, both high and low achievers find it easier to learn the meaning of new words by their definitions. Almost all of the high achievers and majority of the low achievers (26 of them) said that they 'always' or 'frequently' use this strategy to know the meaning of new words.

3.1.10 Learn meaning through synonyms and antonyms

The distribution of students' responses about the strategy of learning meaning through synonyms and antonyms is presented below:

Table No. 10

Learn meaning through synonyms and antonyms

SN	Item	High Achievers=40					Low Achievers=40				
		Frequency of responses					Frequency of responses				
		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
10.	Learn meaning through synonyms and antonyms	-	-	4	19	17	-	1	5	18	16

The table above shows that almost all of the high and low achievers learn new words through synonyms and antonyms. Seventeen of the high achievers and sixteen of the low achievers stated that they 'always' learn the meaning of new words through synonyms and antonyms. Similarly, nineteen of the high achievers and eighteen of the low achievers reported that they 'frequently' use this strategy.

3.1.11 Group work strategy

The distribution of students' responses about the use of group work strategy is presented below:

Table No. 11

Group work strategy

SN	Item	High Achievers=40					Low Achievers=40				
		Frequency of responses					Frequency of responses				
		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
11.	Work in group to discover the meaning of new words	2	3	14	10	11	15	10	8	5	2

As stated in the table above, about fifty percent of the high achievers work in group to discover the meaning of new words. Twenty-one of the high achievers reported that they 'frequently' or 'always' discover the meaning of new words through group work and fourteen of them said that they employ the strategy only 'sometimes'. However, most of the low achievers seem to have little inclination towards this strategy. Fifteen of them stated that they 'never' work in group to discover the meaning of new words and ten and eight of them responded respectively that they 'rarely' and 'sometimes' use this strategy.

3.1.12 Interact with native speakers

The distribution of students' responses about the strategy of interacting with native speakers is presented below:

Table No. 12

Interact with native speakers

SN	Item	High Achievers=40					Low Achievers=40				
		Frequency of responses					Frequency of responses				
		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
12.	Interact with native speakers	21	11	7	1	-	28	8	4	-	-

As we can observe in the above table, interacting with the native speakers is one of the least used strategies by both high and low achievers. Almost none of the low achievers use this strategy. Twenty-one of the high achievers 'never' use this strategy; eleven of them 'rarely' use it; and seven of them 'sometimes' use it.

3.1.13 Use new words in sentences

The distribution of students' responses about the strategy of using new words in sentences is presented below:

Table No. 13

Use new words in sentences

SN	Item	High Achievers=40 Frequency of responses					Low Achievers=40 Frequency of responses				
		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
13.	Use new words in sentences	2	3	12	8	15	11	18	8	2	1

So far as the strategy of using new words in sentences is concerned, the majority of the high achievers employ it. Fifteen of the high achievers said that they 'always' use new words in their own sentences; eight of them stated that they 'frequently' do so; and twelve of them answered that they 'sometimes' use this strategy. On the contrary, most of the low achievers are not seen to employ this strategy. Eleven of them reported that they 'never' bother to use new words in their own sentences and eighteen of them responded that they 'rarely' use this strategy.

3.1.14 Study spellings

The distribution of students' responses about the strategy of studying spellings is presented below:

Table No. 14

Study spellings

SN	Item	High Achievers=40					Low Achievers=40				
		Frequency of responses					Frequency of responses				
		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
14.	Study spellings	-	5	6	7	22	-	6	8	7	19

As the above table reveals, the majority of the high and low achievers study the spellings of new words. Twenty-two of the high achievers answered that they 'always' study the spellings of new words and seven of them said that they 'frequently' do so. Similarly, twenty-six of the low achievers responded that they 'always' or 'frequently' study the spellings of new words and eight of them stated that they 'sometimes' do so.

3.1.15 Verbal repetition strategy

The distribution of students' responses about the use of verbal repetition strategy is presented below:

Table No. 15

Verbal repetition strategy

SN	Item	High Achievers=40 Frequency of responses					Low Achievers=40 Frequency of responses				
		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
15.	Verbal repetition	2	5	17	9	7	4	8	13	9	6

As the table above exhibits, there is no such difference between the high and the low achievers in the use of verbal repetition strategy. Seven of the high achievers use this strategy 'always', nine of them 'frequently' and seventeen of them 'sometimes'. In the same way, six of the low achievers use it 'always', nine of them 'frequently' and thirteen of them 'sometimes'.

3.1.16 Written repetition strategy

The distribution of students' responses about the use of written repetition strategy is presented below:

Table No. 16

Written repetition strategy

SN	Items	High Achievers=40					Low Achievers=40				
		Frequency of responses					Frequency of responses				
		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
16.	Written repetition	18	10	7	3	2	20	10	6	3	1

The written repetition of new words is another less preferred strategy by both high and low achievers. A considerable number of both high and low achievers (28 high achievers and 30 low achievers) reported that they 'never' or 'rarely' use this strategy.

3.1.17 Learn new words from the mass media

The distribution of students' responses about the strategy of learning new words from the mass media is presented below:

Table No. 17

Learn new words from the mass media

SN	Item	High Achievers=40					Low Achievers=40				
		Frequency of responses					Frequency of responses				
		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
17.	Learn new words from radio, TV, newspapers, etc	-	-	6	8	26	-	3	11	8	18

As shown in the above table, almost all of the high achievers learn new words from the mass media. Twenty-six of the high achievers responded that they 'always' learn new words from radio, television, newspapers, magazines, etc. Similarly, eight of them said that they 'frequently' learn new words from the mass media. The majority of the low achievers also learn new words from the mass media. Eighteen of them answered that they 'always' use this strategy; eight of them stated that they 'frequently' use it; and eleven of them said that they 'sometimes' use it.

3.1.18 Semantic mapping strategy

The distribution of students' responses about the use of semantic mapping strategy is presented below:

Table No. 18

Semantic mapping strategy

SN	Item	High Achievers=40					Low Achievers=40				
		Frequency of responses					Frequency of responses				
		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
18.	Connect a new word to other words on the same topic	7	9	13	6	5	12	11	10	4	3

The above table displays that the majority of the low achievers do not use the semantic mapping strategy. Twenty-three of them reported that they 'never' or 'rarely' employ this strategy and ten of them stated that they use it only 'sometimes'. The high achievers are also not seen to adopt semantic mapping strategy often. Seven of the high achievers answered that they 'never' employ this strategy; nine of them stated that they 'rarely' use it; thirteen of them said that they 'sometimes' use it; six of them reported that they 'frequently' use it; and five of them said that they 'always' use it.

3.1.19 Connect a new word to personal experience

The distribution of students' responses about the strategy of connecting new words to personal experience is presented below:

Table No. 19

Connect a new word to personal experience

SN	Item	High Achievers=40					Low Achievers=40				
		Frequency of responses					Frequency of responses				
		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
19.	Connect a new word to personal experience	1	5	8	12	14	8	13	10	5	4

As the above table demonstrates, most of the low achievers do not use the strategy of connecting a new word to personal experience to remember it. Eight of the low achievers stated that they 'never' employ the strategy; thirteen of them responded that they 'rarely' use it; and ten of them said that they 'sometimes' use it. However, the high achievers are seen to use this strategy more often than low achievers. Fourteen of the high achievers answered that they 'always' use this strategy and twelve of them said that they 'frequently' use it.

3.1.20 Associate a new word with the object it refers to

The distribution of students' responses about the use of association strategy is presented below:

Table No. 20

Association strategy

SN	Item	High Achievers=40					Low Achievers=40				
		Frequency of responses					Frequency of responses				
		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
20.	Associate a new word with the object it refers to	-	2	11	9	18	-	2	15	7	16

As indicated in the table above, a substantial number of high achievers tend to associate a new word with the object it refers to so that they can easily remember it. Eighteen of the high achievers reported that they 'always' associate a new word with the object it refers to and nine of them said that they 'frequently' do so. Similarly, the majority of the low achievers also use this strategy. Sixteen of them stated that they 'always' employ this strategy; seven of them responded that they 'frequently' use it; and fifteen of them said that they 'sometimes' use it.

3.1.21 Look at the parts of speech of a new word

The distribution of students' responses about the strategy of looking at the parts of speech of new words is presented below:

Table No. 21

Look at the parts of speech of new words

SN	Item	High Achievers=40					Low Achievers=40				
		Frequency of responses					Frequency of responses				
		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
21.	Look at the parts of speech of a new word to discover its meaning	5	10	13	8	4	15	13	10	2	-

The above table demonstrates that a considerable number of low achievers seem to be ignorant of the strategy of looking at the parts of speech of a new word to discover its meaning. Twenty-eight of the low achievers answered that they 'never' or 'rarely' look at the parts of speech of new words to discover their meaning. The high achievers too do not seem to use this strategy often. Five of them stated that they 'never' exploit this strategy; ten of them reported that they 'rarely' use it; and thirteen of them said that they 'sometimes' use it. Only four and eight of them stated respectively that they 'always' and 'frequently' look at the parts of speech of a new word to discover its meaning.

3.1.22 Note down any particular grammatical characteristics of a new word

The distribution of students' responses about the strategy of noting down any particular grammatical characteristics of new words is presented below:

Table No. 22

Note down any particular grammatical characteristics of a new word

SN	Item	High Achievers=40					Low Achievers=40				
		Frequency of responses					Frequency of responses				
		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
22.	Note down any particular grammatical characteristics of a new word	12	7	13	5	3	18	8	12	2	-

As shown in the above table, most of the low achievers do not bother to note down any particular grammatical characteristics of a new word. Neither do the high achievers. Eighteen of the low achievers and twelve of the high achievers reported that they 'never' note down any grammatical characteristics of any new word. Likewise, eight low achievers and seven high achievers answered that they 'rarely' employ this strategy. And thirteen high achievers and twelve low achievers said that they 'sometimes' use this strategy.

3.1.23 Learn the words of an idiom together

The distribution of students' responses about the strategy of learning the words of an idiom together is presented below:

Table No. 23

Learn the words of an idiom together

SN	Item	High Achievers=40					Low Achievers=40				
		Frequency of responses					Frequency of responses				
		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
23.	Learn the words of an idiom together	-	4	10	14	12	4	16	9	6	5

As we can observe in the table above, the majority of the high achievers learn the words of an idiom together. Twelve of the high achievers said that they 'always' learn the words of an idiom together; fourteen of them stated that they 'frequently' do so; and ten of them reported that they 'sometimes' use this strategy. On the other hand, only five of the low achievers responded that they 'always' learn the words of an idiom together; six of them said that they 'frequently' do so. Nine of them said that they 'sometimes' use this strategy and sixteen of them stated that they 'rarely' use it.

3.1.24 Create a mental image of the meaning of a new word

The distribution of students' responses about the strategy of creating a mental image of the meanings of new words is presented below:

Table No. 24

Create a mental image of the meaning of a new word

SN	Item	High Achievers=40					Low Achievers=40				
		Frequency of responses					Frequency of responses				
		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
24.	Create a mental image of the meaning of a new word	1	6	8	9	16	3	8	14	6	9

As depicted in the above table, the high achievers tend to create a mental image of the meaning of a new word more frequently than the low achievers. Sixteen of the high achievers answered that they 'always' create a mental image of the meaning of new words and nine of them said that they 'frequently' do so. But only nine of the low achievers reported that they 'always' make use of this strategy; six of them responded that they 'frequently' employ it; and fourteen of them said that they 'sometimes' use it.

3.1.25 Skip a new word

The distribution of students' responses about the strategy of skipping a new word is presented below:

Table No. 25

Skip a new word

SN	Item	High Achievers=40					Low Achievers=40				
		Frequency of responses					Frequency of responses				
		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
25.	Skip a new word	25	11	4	-	-	18	4	16	1	1

As the above table shows, almost none of the high achievers skip any new word they come across. Twenty-five of them answered that they 'never' skip any new word they come across; eleven of them stated that they 'rarely' ignore any new word they encounter. So far as the low achievers are concerned, eighteen of them stated that they 'never' ignore any new word; four of them said that they 'rarely' skip any new word; and sixteen of them reported that they 'sometimes' skip the new words they encounter.

3.2 The Most Commonly Used Strategies by the High and low Achievers

In order to find out the most commonly used vocabulary learning strategies by the high and low achievers, the researcher calculated the mean weightage of each item. For this, weightage of 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 was assigned to the responses 'never', 'rarely', 'sometimes', 'frequently' and 'always' respectively. Then, the mean weightage of each item was calculated as follows:

$$Mean\ weightage = \frac{Total\ weightage\ score}{n1 + n2 + n3 + n4 + n5}$$

Where, total weightage score = $n_1 \times 1 + n_2 \times 2 + n_3 \times 3 + n_4 \times 4 + n_5 \times 5$ and $n_1 + n_2 + n_3 + n_4 + n_5$ = the total number of responses in the questionnaire.

The numerical value of the mean weightage ranges from 1 to 5. The items with the mean weightage 3.5 and above were considered to be the most commonly used vocabulary learning strategies.

3.2.1 The Most Commonly Used Strategies by the High Achievers

The most commonly used vocabulary learning strategies by the high achievers along with their corresponding mean weightage are presented in the table below:

Table No. 26

The most commonly used strategies by the high achievers

Ranking	Items	Mean weightage
1	Learn new words from radio, TV, newspapers, etc.	4.5
2	Use glossary of the book	4.45
3	Learn meaning through synonyms and antonyms	4.325
4	Study spellings	4.15
5	Associate a new word with the object it refers to	4.075
6	Learn meanings by definitions	4.05
7	Ask teacher for a paraphrase or synonym	4.025
8	Guess meaning from the context	4
9	Learn the words of an idiom together	3.85
10	Create a mental image of the meaning of a new word	3.825
11	Connect a new word to personal experience	3.825
12	Use new words in sentences	3.775
13	Use a monolingual dictionary	3.7
14	Work in group to discover the meaning of new words	3.625

As the above table shows, the most commonly used vocabulary learning strategies by the high achievers are learning from the mass media, learning from the glossary of the book, learning through synonyms and antonyms, studying the spellings of new words, associating new words with the objects they refer to, learning by definitions, asking teacher for a paraphrase or synonym and guessing the meaning of new words from the context. Similarly, learning the words of an idiom together, creating a mental image of the meaning of new words and connecting new words

to personal experience are other most frequently used strategies by the high achievers. The high achievers are also seen to employ such strategies as using new words in sentences, using a monolingual dictionary and working in group to discover the meaning of new words to a great extent.

3.2.2 The Most Commonly Used Strategies by the Low Achievers

The most commonly used strategies by the low achievers along with their corresponding mean weightage are presented in the table below:

Table No. 27

The most commonly used strategies by the low achievers

Ranking	Items	Mean weightage
1	Use a bilingual dictionary	4.75
2	Learn meaning through synonyms and antonyms	4.225
3	Learn new words from radio, TV, newspapers, etc.	4.025
4	Study spellings	3.975
5	Associate a new word with the object it refers to	3.925
6	Ask teacher to translate new English words into Nepali	3.875
7	Learn meanings by definitions	3.825
8	Ask friends to explain the meaning of new words	3.65

As the table above demonstrates, the most commonly used strategies by the low achievers are using a bilingual dictionary, learning through synonyms and antonyms, learning from the mass media, studying the spellings of new words and associating new words with the objects they refer to. Likewise, asking teacher to

translate new English words into Nepali, learning by definitions and asking friends to explain the meaning of new words are other most frequently used strategies by the low achievers.

3.3   Analysis of the Data Collected Through Interviews with Teachers

In order to complement the data collected through questionnaire from the students, the researcher interviewed the English teachers of the selected schools about the vocabulary learning strategies that their students use. All the teachers confirmed that the high achievers make use of more strategies than the low achievers to learn English vocabulary.

The teachers said that the low achievers often ask them to translate new English words into Nepali while few high achievers do so. Almost all of the teachers said that only 'good' students (i.e. high achievers) work in group to discover the meaning of new words. In response to the question how often their students use new English words in sentences of their own, they said that only a few high achievers employ this strategy. The teachers also stated that verbal repetition of new words is a common practice among their students, but they added that their students very rarely engage in written repetition of new words. They said that their students, particularly the high achievers frequently note down the meaning of new words during classroom discussion. Most of the teachers said that the high achievers are quick to refer to the glossary section of their book to know the meaning of difficult words they encounter in their book. But they said that the low achievers only sometimes use this strategy. The teachers' responses largely conform to those of the students.

When asked what problems they face while teaching vocabulary, they mentioned the following problems:

- inappropriate use;

- inability to retrieve right vocabulary when needed;

- use of incorrect grammatical form; and

- pronunciation and spelling problems.

However, most of the teachers admitted that they rarely train their students in the use of vocabulary learning strategies.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents the findings based on the analysis of data and recommendations.

4.1   Findings

On the basis of the analysis and interpretation of the data in the previous chapter, the major findings of the study are summarized below:

1. The high achievers were found to draw on a wide range of vocabulary learning strategies. By contrast, the low achievers were found to use a limited range of vocabulary learning strategies. They seemed to stick to a few strategies that they were familiar with.

2. One striking difference found between the high and the low achievers in the use of vocabulary learning strategies was that the low achievers were not found to employ such useful strategies as contextual guessing, connecting new words to personal experience, using a monolingual dictionary, using new words in sentences and working in group which were frequently used by the high achievers.

3. The most commonly used English vocabulary learning strategies by the high achievers were as follows:

- Learn new words from radio, TV, newspapers, etc.

- Use glossary of the book

- Learn meaning through synonyms and antonyms

- Study spellings

- Associate a new word with the object it refers to

- Learn meanings by definitions

- Ask teacher for a paraphrase or synonym

- Guess meaning from the context

- Learn the words of an idiom together

- Create a mental image of the meaning of a new word

- Connect a new word to personal experience

- Use new words in sentences

- Use a monolingual dictionary

- Work in group to discover the meaning of new words

4. Similarly, the most commonly used strategies by the low achievers were as follows:

- Use a bilingual dictionary

- Learn meaning through synonyms and antonyms

- Learn new words from radio, TV, newspapers, etc.

- Study spellings

- Associate a new word with the object it refers to

- Ask teacher to translate new English words into Nepali

- Learn meanings by definitions

- Ask friends to explain the meaning of new words

4.2   Recommendations

On the basis of the findings of the study, the researcher would like to make the following recommendations:

1. First and foremost, more vocabulary learning strategies should be introduced to the students, particularly the low achievers, and they should be trained to use those strategies appropriately.

2. Teachers should always try to make their students independent learners who can take the initiative to manage their own learning.

3. Teachers and learners should be mindful of the importance of vocabulary and vocabulary learning and sufficient time and effort should be devoted to it.

4. Teachers should provide a rich environment for the students to learn vocabulary in and outside the class.

5. Vocabulary should be taught in context rather than in isolation.

6. Curriculum designers and textbook writers should consider the varieties of learning strategies to be used when preparing materials.

7. Last but not the least, more researches should be carried out in the field of vocabulary learning strategies to arrive at more reliable conclusions.

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Appendix-I

Sample Schools

1.   Shree Mahendra Bauddha Secondary School, Bauddha

2.   Shree Janakalyan Higher Secondary School, Mahankal

3.   Shram Rastria Secondary School, Tusal

4.   Pashupati Mitra Secondary School, Chabahil

5.   Shree Arunodaya Secondary School, Arubari

6.   Shree Bal Uddhar Higher Secondary School, Kapan

7.   Chamunda Higher Secondary School, Jorpati

8.   Sharada Secondary School, Gaushala

9.   Tarun Secondary School, Balaju

10.   Mansingh Dharma Secondary School, Manamaiju

<u>Vocabulary Learning Strategy Questionnaire</u>

Name: Age:

School: Mother tongue:

Dear Student,

   Given below are vocabulary learning strategies. I would like you to read each strategy carefully and tick one of the options (*Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Frequently, Always*) to indicate how often you use the strategy while learning English vocabulary. If you do not use a strategy at all, please tick the word *Never*. If you use a strategy, then please tick one of the words, *Rarely*, *Sometimes, Frequently* or *Always*, according to the frequency of your using the strategy. There are no right or wrong answers, and you are not evaluated based on your responses.

1. I guess the meaning of a new word from the context in which it has been used.

   Never Rarely Sometimes Frequently Always

2. I look up a new word I come across in an English-English dictionary.

   Never Rarely Sometimes Frequently Always

3. I look up the word in an English-Nepali dictionary.

   Never Rarely Sometimes Frequently Always

4. I ask my teacher for a paraphrase or synonym of a new word.

    Never   *Rarely*   *Sometimes*   *Frequently*   *Always*

5. I ask my friends to explain the meaning of new words.

    Never   *Rarely*   *Sometimes*   *Frequently*   *Always*

6. I ask my teacher to translate a new English word into Nepali.

    Never   *Rarely*   *Sometimes*   *Frequently*   *Always*

7. I learn new words from the glossary of my book.

    Never   *Rarely*   *Sometimes*   *Frequently*   *Always*

8. I keep a vocabulary notebook.

    Never   *Rarely*   *Sometimes*   *Frequently*   *Always*

9. I learn new words by their definitions.

    Never   *Rarely*   *Sometimes*   *Frequently*   *Always*

10. I learn new words through synonyms and antonyms.

    Never   *Rarely*   *Sometimes*   *Frequently*   *Always*

11. I work in group to discover the meaning of new words.

    Never   *Rarely*   *Sometimes*   *Frequently*   *Always*

12. I learn new words by interacting with native speakers.

    Never   *Rarely*   *Sometimes*   *Frequently*   *Always*

13. I use new words in sentences so that I can remember them.

    Never   *Rarely*   *Sometimes*   *Frequently*   *Always*

14. I study the spelling of new words.

    Never   *Rarely*   *Sometimes*   *Frequently*   *Always*

15. I say a new English word several times so that I can remember it.

    Never   Rarely   Sometimes   Frequently   Always

16. I write a new English word several times so that I can remember it.

    Never   Rarely   Sometimes   Frequently   Always

17. I learn new English words from radio, television, newspapers, magazines, etc.

    Never   Rarely   Sometimes   Frequently   Always

18. I connect a new word to other English words on the same topic.

    Never   Rarely   Sometimes   Frequently   Always

19. I connect a new word to my personal experience to remember it.

    Never   Rarely   Sometimes   Frequently   Always

20. I associate a new word with the object it refers to so that I can easily remember it.

    Never   Rarely   Sometimes   Frequently   Always

21. I look at the parts of speech (e.g. noun, adjective, verb, etc.) of a new word to discover its meaning.

    Never   Rarely   Sometimes   Frequently   Always

22. I note down any particular grammatical characteristics of a new word.

    Never   Rarely   Sometimes   Frequently   Always

23. I learn the words of an idiom together.

    Never   Rarely   Sometimes   Frequently   Always

24.   I create a mental image of the meaning of a new word.

Never   Rarely   Sometimes   Frequently   Always

25.   I skip any new word I come across.

Never   Rarely   Sometimes   Frequently   Always

If you use any other strategy or technique to learn English vocabulary, write it here:

_____

_____

_____

Thank you

Appendix-III

Interview sheet for teachers

Name:

Sex: Male / Female

School:

1. How do you teach vocabulary to your students?

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2. Do your students ask you the meaning of every new word they come

   across?

   ………………………………………………………………………………………

   ………………………………………………………………………………………

3. Do they ask you to translate new English words into Nepali?

   How often?

   ………………………………………………………………………………………

   ………………………………………………………………………………………

4. Do your students work in group to find the meaning of new words?

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5. How often do your students use new English words in sentences of their
    own?

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6. Do your students engage in verbal or written repetition of the new words to
    remember them?

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7. Do they note down the meaning of difficult words during classroom
    discussion?

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8. How often do they use the glossary section of the book to know the
    meaning of new words?

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9. What problems do you face while teaching vocabulary?

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10.   Please mention any four strategies that you have found your students using most frequently while learning English vocabulary.

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Thank you very much for your kind co-operation