Effective Strategies for Turning Receptive Vocabulary into Productive Vocabulary in EFL Context

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Abstract
Vocabulary acquisition has been a main concern of EFL English teachers and learners. There have been tons of research to examine the student’s level of receptive vocabulary and productive vocabulary, but no research has conducted on how turning receptive vocabulary into productive vocabulary. This study has reported the impact of the teaching methodology; materials and learning context on students’ productive use of vocabulary. In addition, exploring the appropriate methods and approaches that the teacher can deploy in class to assist the students to turn their receptive vocabulary into productive vocabulary. Results indicate that EFL learners through practicing Kramsch’s procedure of vocabulary learning and some effective strategies of learning vocabulary enabled the students to turn their receptive vocabulary into productive one successfully.

1. Introduction
“Vocabulary is an essential building block of language and as such it makes sense to be able to measure learners’ knowledge of it” (Schmitt, Schmitt & Clapham, 2001, p.55). Therefore, Vocabulary is one of the most pivotal components of language learning and teaching of a foreign language since it affords learner of the language access to all forms of oral and written communication of the word (Moeller, Ketsman & Masmaliyeva, 2009, p.1).

Vocabulary knowledge is also a fundamental facet of literacy skills (Pulido & Hambrick 2008, p.164). A learner of the new language has to understand the vocabulary knowledge and work on improving it to produce the language. So, knowing a word means understanding of abundant facets of the vocabulary knowledge that is a multidimensional and complex construct (Henriksen 1999; Nation 2001; Read 2000 cited in Zhong, 2011, p.117).

For this purpose, teachers should use the most effective strategies that improve learner’s vocabulary retrieval for production skills like speaking and writing. Therefore, the researcher in this study has promoted some effective strategies that help the learners to turn their passive vocabulary into active vocabulary and practice it in the more production skills.

1.1. Problem statement:
Recognizing, Understanding, and using the vocabulary is a very essential aspect in learning the English language (Ak Sedau, 2004, p.6). Unfortunately, it has been given little attention to assist or promote opportunities for the learners of the target language, in most of Iraqi schools and universities, to turn their receptive vocabulary into productive vocabulary. That is why the students’ receptive vocabulary size is much larger than their productive vocabulary size. This problem creates an obstacle for the learners of English language to make slower and slower progression in mastering and learning the language. All in all, the researcher is interested in finding out the reasons that deprive or unable students to turn their receptive vocabulary into productive vocabulary words. In addition, to explore the appropriate methods and approaches that the teacher can deploy in class to assist and encourage the students to use receptive vocabulary words productively.

1.2. Significance and purpose of the study:
This study has undertaken in order to find out the impact of the teaching methodology; materials and learning context have on students’ productive use of vocabulary, and finding out the appropriate methods, strategies and approaches that the teacher can deploy in class to assist the students to turn their receptive vocabulary into productive vocabulary. This study benefiting both EFL students and teachers sectors:

- The direct recipients of the output of this research are EFL learners. This research promotes a better environment for increasing students’ productive vocabulary use. Teacher’s using different methods and approaches to create a motivated atmosphere for students, pave the way of practicing and utilizing the receptive vocabulary items that they know in their writing and speaking. Therefore, they will be able to expand and use more productive vocabulary words in their speeches and writing by the end of this learning vocabulary process.

- Regarding teachers of English language who teach vocabulary and comprehension course. This research helps them to discover some proper and valuable methods and approaches that conduct students’ enhancing or turning their receptive vocabulary to productive vocabulary. It also aids the teachers to identify the reasons behind student’s having a much larger size of receptive vocabulary than their productive...
vocabulary word size, and to work out remedial procedures to help them to create an authentic learning environment that help the learners to increase their level of productive vocabulary use.

**Research questions:**
1. What impact does the teaching methodology; materials and learning context have on students’ productive use of vocabulary?
2. What are the appropriate methods, strategies and approaches that the teacher can deploy in class to assist the students to turn their receptive vocabulary into productive vocabulary?

**2. Literature review:**

**What is Vocabulary?**

In a Longman dictionary of contemporary English vocabulary is defined as “all the words that someone knows or uses” in a target language (2003, p.1843). Regarding Schmitt, Hedge and Nation vocabulary is the meaning-carrier of a language that the learner and the speaker of the language need to comprehend and deploy in the four skills of the language (listening, speaking, writing and reading) (Schmitt, 2004; Hedge, 2000; Nation, 2001). While Lehr, Osborn and Hiebert define vocabulary as knowledge of words and word meanings that they have two form of oral and print. Oral words are those vocabulary words that the learner recognize and utilize in listening and speaking. Print vocabulary words incorporate those vocabulary items that the learner recognize and deploy in reading and writing (2004, p.5).

Regarding teachers the term vocabulary has diverse meanings. To illustrate, there are some instructors utilize this term to mean *sight-word vocabularies*, which means learners’ immediate recognition of written words. While some other teachers deploy the vocabulary term as *meaning vocabularies* as the learners’ understanding of the words. *Listening vocabularies* is another meaning of the term of vocabulary that is use by another group of teachers that indicates the students’ understanding of vocabulary items that they hear in the spoken language. Content teachers employ the term academic vocabulary to relate it to content-specific words (Antonacci & O’Callaghan, 2012, p.83).

**What is the importance of vocabulary in English language?**

Vocabulary is an essential element within a language that the learner acquires to learn; because it is overwhelming the majority of meaning is carried lexically. Albeit vocabulary is not the only element that convey meaning, but also there are some other vital feature like grammar, intonation, stress, tone of voice, rhythm, pauses, silences or hesitations, etc. According to McCarthy “no matter how well the students learns grammar, no matter how successful the sounds of L2 are mastered, without words to express a wide range of meanings, communication in an L2 just cannot happen in any meaningful way” (1990, VIII). Thus, it can be said that vocabulary is basic to English language teaching because without adequate vocabulary items learners cannot appreciate others expressions and ideas or express their own ideas. Wilkins states, “… while without grammars very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed” (1972, pp.111-112). This point reflects my experience while I tried to learn a Turkish language: even without grammar, with some valuable vocabulary words and expressions, I could manage to communicate with my Turkish colleagues. “If you spend most of your time studying grammar, your English will not improve very much. You will see most improvement if you learn more words and expressions. You can say very little with grammar, but you can say almost anything with words!” (Dellar H and Hocking D, Innovations, ITP as cited in Thornbury, 2002, p.13). So, we can conclude that vocabulary is much more important than grammar, because it is the key to the learners of the language to comprehend what they hear and read in an Educational organization or outside it or while they communicate with other people.

**What is the place of vocabulary in English language teaching and learning?**

Experienced teacher knows very well how much vocabulary in learning a foreign/second language is crucial. They also know that the learners need to learn a certain amount of the vocabulary items, which the native speaker and writer of English utilize. Students’ lack of vocabulary words incapable them to understand the words used in the texts and communication. Reading, communication and writing halt when the students do not know the necessary vocabulary words. Instructors are aware of such problems and they never doubted the importance of learning vocabulary. They do not believe teaching vocabulary needs to be deferred till grammar is mastered (Nation, 1990 cited in Ak Sedau, 2004, pp.14-15). As reported by Nation and Waring (1997) vocabulary knowledge is one of the fundamental aspects to learn just like the four language skills and it should be considered as an essential component of learning a second/foreign language because it inspires and leads the learner the way to communicate. Thus, teaching vocabulary is one of the critical ways of improving vocabulary knowledge. It should be well-programmed and planned since it aids the students to expand their vocabulary and when they realize it is most needed for the message-focused tasks like listening, speaking, reading, and writing.
The way teachers teach vocabulary has a great influence on the way the learners learn the word. Most books contain the answer keys of the exercises. Regarding the words and phrases, this book only covers the Waring experiences textbook’s “vocabulary exercises should focus on deepening and internalizing knowledge of exercises. They do not have the chance to practice the words in different contexts and in different forms. As it. This means the activity makes a great possibility for the students to learn the word and store it in their long memory.

2.1. Teaching words in an isolated way:

Steven Stahl claims, "Vocabulary knowledge is knowledge; the knowledge of a word not only implies a definition, but also implies how that word fits into the world." (2005, p.95) The way teachers teach vocabulary has a great influence on the way the learners learn the word. Most teachers who teach vocabulary they teach the isolated word, without presenting the detail components of the family words of the vocabulary and the collocation that go with the word. According to Waring teaching the words in an isolated way is an inefficient way of teaching vocabulary and it is really doubtful that is way of teaching help the learner to learn and practice the word accurately and productively (2002, ¶9). One of the reasons that the teachers teach individual words without presenting full information might be the lack of time. The teacher does not have enough time in order to cover or teach the whole knowledge of the word. Teachers’ lack of experience or not well equipped of teaching vocabulary words is another reason.

2.2. Spending more time on introducing the vocabulary instead practicing it: students having more time on introducing the word rather than practicing it, make a gap between learning the word theoretically and practically. This may take place as a result of lack of using activities that the teachers should use in order to engage the students in a learning chance. Utilizing a variety of teaching vocabulary activity aid the learners to easily retrieve it. This means the activity makes a great possibility for the students to learn the word and store it in their long memory.

3. Learning context

3.1. Insufficient motivation: learning vocabulary is one of the hardest factors that the students always complain
about, because they do not know what strategy is work for them. They try to memorize it that ends in being unable to recall it. In this way students will be disappointed. Another point is student’s limited time to study. For instance, my students do not have enough time to study since they are a primary teacher and they work in the morning and studying at evening. This again de-motivates them in learning the vocabulary items.

3.2. Artificial contexts instead of real-life contexts: student’s learning vocabulary in an artificial context make hard for the students to learn, and it may not easy for the students to retrieve them easily. Whereas, if the students could practice and learn the vocabulary items in a real-life context, they will be able learn easily and recall easily.

4. Procedure and Strategies:
“Learning vocabulary is likely to be one of the easiest things concerning learning a language, but it is also one of the hardest thing to do, especially when people have reached an advanced level” (Mongkol, 2008, p.1). What is the symbol of student’s learning vocabulary? How can we say that the learner learned the lexical? What does learning vocabulary mean? It is impossible to expect learning happen while the students cannot retrieve the word and use it productively. When the learners learn the word they know both the meaning of the word and how to use the words (Robinson, 1989, p.275). For this end, the students are in a need of effective strategies and procedures to stimulate and aid them recall their receptive vocabulary and deploy it in productive skills.

In this study, the researcher has made a use of Kramsch’s procedure of vocabulary learning (1979 as cited in Nation, 2001, p.366) and some effective strategies to expand their productive vocabulary and turn their passive possibility to use it productively. In this stage, the teacher pay quite attention to encourage the students to select the symbol of student’s learning vocabulary?

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this reason, the teacher dedicates enough time to apply the MEM strategy in class or recommend the students to practice it at home, in case of insufficient time in class. The importance of motivating the learners to utilize the MEM strategy in this phase is, it makes easy for the students to remember the words easily and use it in their speeches and writings productively. If the students unable to retrieve the word easily, it would be difficult to use it productively.

4.4. Sharing with others: students have made use of social strategy in this point. The learners have shared the knowledge of the words with their classmates in pairs or groups (if the class was not a crowded one each student has to present his/her group words in class). Each student has presented the group of the words that they were interested in and collected enough knowledge about them to his/her partner or the group. This chance of presenting and sharing what he/she has learned in class, aid the presenter to orally practice what he/she had learnt. Moreover, the process of sharing enriches other students’ knowledge, whose listen to the presenter, about some other vocabulary despite the number of words they have chosen. In addition, it may encourage adding some other vocabulary to their group of vocabulary when they realize the importance of the presented vocabulary. The role of the teacher in this stage was monitoring the students and gave feedback or made comment in case of need to work on expanding students’ knowledge of vocabulary or gave more information about the words.

4.5. Assessing and monitoring learning: in this step through the game students has assessed each other’s learning vocabulary and the level of the receptive and productive use of the word. To illustrate, the students have worked in pair with having the following Rubric; for each learner 6 similar Rubric sheet prepared. The students used their colour cards to use in their game. Each student has tested on his/her six vocabulary words by his/her partner (Nation, 2001, p.368). The first student has selected the cards one by one and questioning the second student about the selected vocabulary items and all related knowledge about them. Additionally, testing how much the second learner able to apply the learned knowledge in another context. After the first students finished in his/her role as tester, so the role has turned. In case the tester need any help or has any question or was not sure about the second student’s answer, the teacher was provided helps and guided them.

Table. 1 Rubric
This table derived from the (Nation, 2001, pp. 560-561)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student’s Name:</th>
<th>__________________________________________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Record The Vocabulary:</td>
<td>________________________________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form of the Vocabulary</th>
<th>Spoken</th>
<th>Receptive</th>
<th>Productive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The learner can only recognize the spoken form of the word?</td>
<td>The learner can pronounce the word correctly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written</td>
<td>Receptive</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The learner can only recognize the written form of the word?</td>
<td>The learner can spell and write the word correctly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word parts</td>
<td>Productive</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The learner can only recognize the word parts.</td>
<td>The learner can effectively use the word parts in his/her speeches or sentences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning</td>
<td>Receptive</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form &amp; Meaning</td>
<td></td>
<td>The learner can only recall the appropriate meaning for the word form.</td>
<td>The learner can produce the appropriate word form to express the target meaning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associations</td>
<td>Productive</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The learner can produce common association for the word.</td>
<td>The learner can recall the word when presented with a related idea.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use</td>
<td>Receptive</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammatical functions</td>
<td></td>
<td>The learner can recognise correct uses of the word in context.</td>
<td>The learner can use this word in the correct grammatical patterns.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Receptive Ticked No. (____) out of (7)  
Productive Ticked No. (____) out of (7)

The aim behind using the provided Rubric was to know how much the students learn the word and what
are the level of receptive and productive vocabulary words of the learner. If the learners could recognize the vocabulary more than using productively like (Receptive Ticked No.(6) but Productive Ticked No.(3)) it means the learner need to work on improving his/her knowledge about the words till he/she will be able to use it productively. According to the students low result the teacher advised and assisted the students to know how to develop his/her level.

4.6. Recycling the vocabulary: the teacher has assigned the students to write a report or short story or a paragraph about any topic that help the students to practice and use accurately the selected vocabulary words. The students have to make serious and conscious effort to use the vocabulary words with their collocation, synonym, antonym, and in different forms if possible in their work. The students in their piece of writing should underline the used words to help the checker easily find them (Nation, 2001, p.368). Despite practicing the words in writing the teacher has always encouraged the students to use them also in authentic situation outside the class. After checking students writing, if the students made any mistake regarding the wrong use of the word, collocation, grammar, synonym, antonym, etc. the teacher as usual was available to give feedbacks to the students to correct their mistakes.

Methodology
Participants
The study was conducted with 30 students all native speakers of Kurdish language in the 29-53 year age. They were studying at School of Basic Education - English Language Department at Sulaimani University - Second stage - Evening Class. The students were attending a required general English course and were registered in one group, which included (11 male and 19 female) students. The general English course was a Vocabulary and Comprehension course with two-hour per-week. The “Oxford Word Skills” book by ‘Rith Gairns and Stuart Redman’ (Advanced) was used as the instructional material.

Instruments
In order to collect data for the research, the researcher used the questionnaire.

The Questionnaire
The researcher adapted the questions to make them relevant to this research study. Both pre-test and post-test were consisting of the same questionnaire that contained 13 items (see Appendix A) with giving a Likert scale, which was consist of five Likert items (1. Never or almost never true of me. 2. Usually not true of me. 3. Somewhat true of me. 4. Usually true of me. 5. Always or almost always true of me). The questions were about how much students could turn their receptive vocabulary into productive vocabulary with practicing Kramsch’s procedure of vocabulary learning. Pre-test questionnaire were conducted before starting the experiment. The same questionnaire used for post-test. The aim was to see how much Kramsch’s procedure of vocabulary learning and some vocabulary learning and teaching strategies facilitate the students to use their receptive vocabulary in productive skills like oral presenting (speech) and writing.

Procedures
In this study, one-group students have set to this study, which were 30 students. Pre-test and Post-test were taken. The Procedure of this study has started with familiarizing students with the process of vocabulary learning, which consists of six stages. After students familiarized with the process of learning and storing vocabulary pre-test were took. During each stage students have required to assigned in class and outside class, finally write a draft to use the lexical items they had learnt.

Researcher personally took the questionnaires into the students’ classes and explained the questions and how to complete the answers. She emphasized that their answers were confidential and that it was important that they responded honestly and sincerely. The explanation and the handing out of the questionnaire were done at the beginning of the lesson to ensure that there was adequate time for the students to respond.
Data analysis
The usual procedures used in analyzing the pre-test and post-test questionnaire responses are the following:

a. Finding out the ‘coefficient midst’.

b. Finding out the ‘percentage weight’.

As Fisher (1956, p. 327) states to find the average of each item in the questionnaire and to get knowledge of strength and weakness of each of item, the following formula can be used:

\[
\text{Coefficient midst} = \frac{1r \times 1 + 2r \times 2 + 3r \times 3 + 4r \times 4 + 5r \times 5}{\text{Total number of repetition}}
\]

Where

1r = repetition of the first answer (Never or almost never true of me) and its value is 1,
2r = repetition of the second answer (Usually not true of me) whose value is 2,
3r = repetition of the third answer (Somewhat true of me) whose value is 3,
4r = repetition of the third answer (Usually true of me) whose value is 4,
5r = repetition of the fifth answer (Always or almost always true of me) whose value is 5;
the total number of repetition means the sample size (30 students).

To change the ‘coefficient midst’ of each item into percentage or what is called percentage weight, according what Al-Ghareeb (1970, p. 77) said, the following formula should be adopted:

\[
\text{Percentage Weight} = \frac{\text{Coefficient midst}}{\text{Maximum value}} \times 100
\]

Where

Maximum value = the maximum degree in the questionnaire which is (5).

Discussion
In order to come up with accurate analysis and detailed discussion of students’ level of productive vocabulary performance, the researcher has shed light on the outcome of both pre-test and post-test in a graph to show how more clearly the ranking improvement of level of productive vocabulary performance by the Foreign English language learners at Sulaimani University.

The graph below is demonstrating the pre-test and post tests productive vocabulary performance scores of each participant, the individual 30 EFL learners, in the research study. The pre-test scores depict the assessment of students’ productive vocabulary performance test scores prior to the intervention of Kramsch’s procedure of vocabulary learning and some strategies to turn the receptive vocabulary into the productive vocabulary. The post-test scores show the assessment of the students’ productive vocabulary performance test scores upon implementation of the intervention Kramsch’s procedure of vocabulary learning and some strategies to turn the receptive vocabulary into the productive vocabulary. In addition, the chart portrays the relationship between the pre-test and post-test scores of the individual learners before and after implementation of the treatment of Kramsch’s procedure of vocabulary learning and some strategies to turn the receptive vocabulary into the productive vocabulary.

Graph. 1. Pre-test and Post-test assessments of the students’ productive vocabulary performance test scores
The following graph is an illustration of the average pre-test and post-test scores of the 30 EFL learners who were participated in this action research project. The average scores of the learners’ pre-test scores are 35%, while the average scores of their posttest scores are 63%. Thus, the research demonstrates that there is an apparent development of 28% in the pre-test and post-test productive vocabulary performance scores of students’ after their completion of the intervention of both the Kramsch’s procedure of vocabulary learning and strategies that provoke turning the passive vocabulary into the active vocabulary.

**Graph. 2. Comparison of Average of Pre-test and Post-test Scores**

![Graph showing comparison of pre-test and post-test scores](image)

**Conclusion**

According to the statistical analyses outcomes of both pre-test and post-test of the study there is a significant growth in learners’ productive vocabulary use in post-test of (28%) compare with pre-test. This indicates that the Kramsch’s procedure of vocabulary learning and the efficient vocabulary learning strategies have had a great impact on the EFL students’ ability in turning the receptive vocabulary into the productive vocabulary and increasing the latter use. As a result, the study concludes that:

- the students’ practicing freedom of choosing their interest vocabulary items and MEM strategy helps them to remember the words easily and use it productively.
- the students’ level of productive vocabulary use has progressed when they had learned a word productively by themselves rather than teaching them receptively. In other words, learners’ having task to record the words and all related knowledge about them assist the students to master the words better than to be only introduced or taught in isolated by the teacher.
- the learners’ sharing knowledge with classmates, assessing each others learning and recycling the vocabulary words provide authentic situations for the students to practice the words they have learned effectively and check their learning and improve it if necessary.
- the learners’ productive vocabulary words grow faster than their receptive vocabulary items with the adapting more appropriate course material, effectual vocabulary learning procedure and effective vocabulary learning strategies.

**Reference**


He Zhuomin (Caddie). Make a leap: How can receptive vocabulary be turned into productive vocabulary in the context of Chinese Senior High School? Retrieved from
Make a leap: How can receptive vocabulary be turned into productive vocabulary in the context of Chinese Senior High School?


Appendix A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age:</td>
<td>Sex:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Questionnaire for EFL writing

**Direction**

This form of questionnaire for EFL writing is for students of English as a foreign language. You will fill statements about learning EFL writing at Koya University. Please read each one and write the response (1, 2, 3, 4 or 5) that tells HOW TRUE OF YOU THE STATEMENT IS on the worksheet for answering and scoring. Circle your choice.

1. **Never or almost never true of me** (Means that the statement is very rarely true of you.)
2. **Usually not true of me** (Means that the statement is true less than half the time.)
3. **Somewhat true of me** (Means that the statement is true of you about half the time.)
4. **Usually true of me** (Means that the statement is true more than half the time.)
5. **Always or almost always true of me** (Means that the statement is true of you almost always.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I can pronounce the word correctly.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I can spell and write the word correctly.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I know the meaning of the word.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I can associate the word to my previous experience or someone close to me or a place etc. to be able to recall the word easily when I want use it.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I can effectively recall vocabulary items I have learned.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>6. I can successfully use the vocabulary words that I learned to express my ideas.</td>
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<td>7. I can successfully use the vocabulary knowledge I have got from dictionary and practice it in productive skills like speaking and writing.</td>
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<td>8. I can use appropriate vocabulary and its forms to effectively in my speeches or writing with the reader or listener.</td>
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<td>9. I can use the word in the grammatical patterns accurately.</td>
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<td>10. I can use the word with appropriate collocations.</td>
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<td>11. I can use the word’s synonym and antonym accurately.</td>
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<td>12. I can use the word at appropriate time.</td>
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<td>13. I use the teacher’s feedback to help me with English language skills especially (speaking and writing).</td>
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</table>

To set this questionnaire the researcher could takes advantage of Nation (2001, pp.560-562)
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