An Action Research on Keyword and Semantic Mapping Strategies of Vocabulary Learning and Retention by EFL Ninth-Grade Students in Jordan

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The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of two vocabulary strategies; keyword and semantic mapping, on English vocabulary learning and retention of the ninth-grade Jordanian students.

The subjects of the study consisted of 90 female students from Al-Fdean Basic School. The subjects were divided into three groups: two experimental and one control.

To guarantee the equivalence and homogeneity of the different groups, the researcher administered a test in English language at the beginning of the first semester of the academic year 2005/2006. Afterwards, each experimental group was taught according to one of the vocabulary teaching strategies (keyword or semantic mapping), while
the control group was taught in the traditional way for four days. After finishing the instructions, all the groups sat for a learning test. Then, after two weeks, the groups sat again for the retention test.

To describe and analyze the data gathered, the researcher used means, standard deviations, One-Way ANOVA and Tukey Multiple Comparison for the Means. The findings of the study indicated that there were significant differences between the mean scores of the students in the keyword group, semantic mapping group and control group in the learning test in favor of the keyword group. There were no significant differences between the mean scores of the students in the three groups in retention test.

In the light of these findings, the researcher recommended that the teachers should give greater recognition to the importance of strategy training, by introducing various vocabulary strategies such as keyword and semantic mapping. She also recommended further research to investigate the effect of the same strategies with different ages and level of proficiency.

Key Words: Vocabulary, Keyword strategy, Semantic mapping strategy, Learning, Retention.