Setting Cukurova University, School of Foreign Languages

Participants 21 students, intermediate level (B1)

Data Collection Tools
- Open-ended Questionnaire (Pre-Implementation)
- Open-ended Questionnaire (Post-Implementation)
- Interviews with students (Post-Implementation)

Research Question
How can I improve the vocabulary learning and retention techniques of the learners?

Problem Identification

WHY?
- Teacher Observation
  The techniques and strategies the students use for vocabulary learning and retention is usually limited to making lists of the unknown words and writing the meaning in the native language without making any associations and connections. This results in a rather poor vocabulary knowledge that is hardly actively used.
- Students Opinions
  
FINDINGS From the Open-Ended Questionnaire
  1. All of the 21 students find vocabulary learning important.
  2. The activities they do for vocabulary learning and retention include:
  3. Most of them do not find these activities sufficient.

“I realized that it is possible to retain vocabulary not just by memorizing but in many other ways.”

FINDINGS
1. 14 Students out of 15 perceived Vocabulary Portfolios useful. They said:

   Student 1. It was such a good activity, I still remember the words I’ve written in my portfolio.

   Student 2. Sometimes the words I’ve written in the portfolio swim before my eyes. When I peek through the file, some words catch my eye, and I check it out again.

   Student 3. Yes because categorizing words as antonyms and synonyms, and using the words in sentences reinforced my learning.

   Student 4. I think it is useful because when the teacher gives feedback on my work, I can check my file for vocabulary anytime I want. Making a portfolio will be of great use to me in the future, too.

2. 12 Students out of 15 stated that their vocabulary studying habits changed. They said:

   Student 3. I used to keep a vocabulary journal before. Now I use extra techniques like making my own flashcards with the words in the portfolio. I revise these words every night.

   Student 4. I realized that I can learn vocabulary in many ways. Not just by memorizing.

   Student 2. Now I learn words with their parts of speech.

   Student 1. Vocabulary Journal is the best for me because I can learn about different aspects of a word like the part of speech, antonyms, synonyms, etc.

   Student 2. I like the Taboo Game because it is easier to learn by games. There is both competition and fun in it.

   Student 3. I would say Taboo Game is the best because I retain at least 85% of the words I learnt as there is a lot of fun in it.

   Student 4. I used to make lists of words, writing their meanings in Turkish. But I could keep them in my mind only until the exam and did not remember them afterwards. With the portfolio, I started using the words I learned in sentences. Now I know a lot of vocabulary.

TEACHER’S REFLECTION
It was such a great and exciting experience to see how my students explored new techniques, strategies as well as their own ways of learning. One of my students said making Word Webs worked like magic for him as when he visualized the word web, he could remember the target word with all its features like collocations, part of speech, antonym, etc. He said he decided to use the Word web as a basic frame to learn even after he started his studies at his major programme. It was such joy to see how he explored his visual style of learning and how he was empowered to use the techniques suitable for him.

Another student told me she loved poetry and using the target words in poems. Yet another one told me he never forgot the words he used in the story. A few others said they loved learning and recycling vocabulary by playing games as it was competitive and fun was involved in it. So apart from learning and retaining vocabulary, I believe this study helped my students discover some of the best techniques that work well for them.

And for me it was such invaluable experience to realize as a teacher how to empower them for their own learning.