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**THE TREATMENT OF VOCABULARY IN EFL TEXTBOOKS**

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*This empirical study researches the treatment given to vocabulary in current textbooks published for teaching English as a foreign and/or second language (EFL/ESL). The article starts with a description of some of the strengths and weaknesses of L2 textbooks. It continues with different aspects related to the introduction of new vocabulary such as ways of organizing it and the main presentation techniques. It moves on to vocabulary practice and factors that influence L2 vocabulary retention in long term memory. Furthermore, the importance of other lexical aspects such as vocabulary recycling, vocabulary learning strategies and the presence of glossaries with L1 translation equivalents at the end of textbooks is discussed. The rest of the article is devoted to the empirical study which consisted of (a) an analysis of 12 textbooks for teaching English in Spain and (b) a questionnaire distributed among 116 Spanish EFL teachers in order to assess their views of the treatment of vocabulary in EFL textbooks they were using. The analysis of the data from both sources, that is, the textbooks under scrutiny and the responses to the questionnaire reveals that the treatment of vocabulary in current EFL textbooks is rather traditional and economic benefits are given preference over pedagogical ones.*

*Key words: L2 textbooks, vocabulary, presentation, practice, vocabulary recycling, vocabulary learning strategies, glossaries with L1 translation equivalents.*

*En este estudio empírico se examina el tratamiento dado al léxico en libros de texto para la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera o segunda lengua (LE/SL) y que están en uso. El artículo parte de una descripción de los puntos fuertes y las debilidades de los libros de texto destinados a la enseñanza de L2. Continúa con aspectos que hacen referencia a la presentación del vocabulario nuevo como son las distintas formas de organizar la presentación de dicho vocabulario y las técnicas de presentación más destacadas, para pasar a la práctica del vocabulario y los factores que ejercen influencia en la retención del léxico en una L2 en la memoria a largo plazo. Asimismo, se revisa la importancia de otros aspectos léxicos como, por ejemplo, el reciclaje del léxico, las estrategias de aprendizaje del vocabulario y la presencia de índices léxicos con traducción a la L1 al final del libro de texto. El resto del artículo se centra en el estudio empírico en el que se analizaron 12 libros de texto para la enseñanza del inglés en España junto con un cuestionario distribuido a 116 profesores españoles de inglés como LE para estudiar sus opiniones acerca del tratamiento dado al vocabulario en libros de texto en uso para la enseñanza del inglés como LE. El análisis de los libros de texto y de los cuestionarios indica que el tratamiento dado al vocabulario en libros de texto actuales para la enseñanza del inglés como LE es bastante tradicional y en dicho tratamiento se le otorga preferencia a los factores económicos antes que a los pedagógicos.*

*Palabras clave: libros de texto para la enseñanza de L2, vocabulario, presentación, práctica, reciclaje léxico, estrategias de aprendizaje del léxico, índices léxicos con traducción a la L1.*

## **1. Introduction**

Nowadays it could be stated that L2 textbooks (hereafter TBs) have a central role as a major pedagogical resource when teaching a non-native language (L2). The main reasons lie in the fact that they save teachers time and act as

(a) a potential syllabus, (b) a resource bank for teaching materials and ideas, and (c) a tool that reacts to current trends in applied linguistics.

Despite this, TBs have also been criticized. Some of their weaknesses reside in their design (Sheldon, 1987) as the presentation and recycling of the new vocabulary rarely appear in the L2 course rationale. Moreover, teachers are generally dissatisfied with the absence of answers to students' needs and interests in TBs (Swan, 1992; Lawley, 2000). Lawley (2000) asserts that this absence of idiosyncratic aspects of a certain readership is due to economic reasons since it is more profitable to publish one single book to be used in different countries than it is to design one that includes the specific teaching context in each country. Thus, the publishing industry causes some negative effects on L2 teaching/learning and TBs. Furthermore, TBs have also been criticized for ignoring the most recent findings in applied linguistics (Sheldon, 1988; Tomlinson, 1991; Harmer, 2001). This may lead to a lack of systematicity in the selection and presentation of vocabulary (Sheldon, 1988). Tomlinson (1991; 2008) also points out that most of the vocabulary practice found in TBs deals with the manipulation of certain L2 linguistic features whereas communicative tasks are rare or non-existent. This practice impedes an extensive use of all the brain resources, since those mechanical exercises only require the encoding and decoding of the L2.

In spite of the growing importance of TBs over the last 4 decades, the L2 language components or areas that appear in them have not always received the same amount of attention in L2 teaching. In the mid 70s Richards (1976, p. 77) states that "the teaching and learning of vocabulary have never aroused the same degree of interest within language teaching as have such issues as grammatical competence, contrastive analysis, reading, or writing." It will not be until 2 decades later with the publishing of the book titled *The Lexical Approach* (Lewis, 1993) when the crucial role of lexis is recognized. Thus, Lewis (1993, p. iv) claims that "language consists of grammaticalised lexis, not lexicalised grammar." Nowadays, the presence of lexis in L2 teaching is no longer debated. Instead, concerns center on what vocabulary to teach and how to teach it.

This paper researches the treatment given to certain lexical aspects such as (a) the selection, presentation and practice of one-word lexical items, (b) vocabulary recycling, (c) vocabulary learning strategies, and (d) the presence of vocabulary lists with L1 translation equivalents at the end of TBs.

## **2. Presentation of New Lexical Items**

Before introducing the new lexical items consideration should be given to vocabulary selection. Some factors such as culture, students' needs/interests and their proficiency level in the L2 can be taken into account when deciding what L2 vocabulary to teach. Gairns and Redman (1986) claim that the students' proficiency level is usually given preference over their needs. Furthermore, during the 20<sup>th</sup> century word lists based on frequency of use became popular in L2 teaching. Nevertheless, a highly frequent lexical item does not necessarily have to be a useful one regarding the students' interests.

As to the different ways of organizing the presentation of the L2 new vocabulary, that is, semantic versus thematic sets, the latter ones have been proved to produce more positive effects on the retention of the L2 vocabulary in long term memory (Tinkham, 1993; Waring, 1997; Papathanasiou, 2009). A semantic organization could be defined as "the organization of related words and expressions [...] into a system which shows their relationship to one another. For example, kinship terms such as *father, mother, brother, sister, uncle, aunt* belong to a lexical field whose relevant features include generation, sex, membership of the father's or mother's side of the family, etc." (Richards & Schmidt, 2002, pp. 305-306). On the other hand, Folse (2004) describes the concept of thematic organization as follows: "another way to organize vocabulary is by looser themes. In thematic sets of words, words that naturally occurred when discussing a given theme are included. The words are not synonyms, antonyms, coordinates or superordinates of each other. The words have no obvious relationship to each other; their only connection is that they are all 'true' with regard to the theme. For example, under the theme 'replanning a vacation', a learner might encounter the words *ticket, Internet, to book, a reservation, to select, a seat, an aisle seat, meal, arrival time, gate, jet*, and

*silver.*” (p. 48). Lexical items in a thematic set tend to belong to different parts of speech (nouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, etc.) and form a psychological association (Papathanasiou, 2009).

With respect to vocabulary presentation, Nation (1993) asserts that direct acquisition of a great number of lexical items is fundamental, especially in the early stages of the learning process when the student’s L2 vocabulary inventory is very limited. On the other hand, incidental teaching through context clues requires a large vocabulary to infer the meaning of an unfamiliar word. Some explicit vocabulary presentation techniques used in TBs are synonyms, antonyms, L1 translation equivalents, written explanations, definitions, and visual techniques. Coming up with a synonym in the student’s L2 might be difficult since not many words have a totally equivalent item in the L2 (Lewis & Hill, 1985). In the case of antonyms, sometimes it is necessary to provide the context where the opposite works as a synonym. For example, *sweet* may be the opposite of *sour* in “sugar is sweet and lemons are sour”, however, the same opposite relationship does not apply in “sweet wine” versus “sour wine” (Gairns & Redman, 1986, p. 74). With regard to L1 translation equivalents, research has shown that it may help increase vocabulary retention in the L2 when compared to the use of other presentation techniques such as pictures only (Lotto & de Groot, 1998). Nevertheless, the employment of L1 translation equivalents as a presentation technique may have some drawbacks since sometimes a one-to-one translation equivalent may be non-existent. Furthermore, it may prevent the student from developing an independent lexicon in the L2 as it does not allow him to be in contact with the L2 (Thornbury, 2002). Conversely, other presentation techniques such as written explanations and definitions expose students to the L2 apart from being more demanding from a cognitive point of view. Finally, visual techniques (drawings and photographs) are useful when teaching concrete vocabulary and semantic fields (Gairns & Redman, 1986).

On the other hand, introducing words through texts has led to mixed results. Hulstijn (1993) showed that L2 students retrieved the target words whose meanings had been inferred from context better than those words whose meanings had been provided in an explicit way. On the

contrary, other authors (Schatz & Baldwin, 1986) have claimed that context clues are very limited and not reliable predictors of word meaning.

### 3. Practice of Lexical Items

Turning attention to the different exercise/activity typologies in L2 vocabulary teaching (Oxford & Scarcella, 1994; Gómez Molina, 2004), it has to be stated that their effectiveness in the retention of L2 vocabulary in long-term memory still needs to be addressed in experimental studies. Some factors that influence L2 vocabulary retention are (a) depth of processing, (b) number of attempts needed for retrieval of the target word, and (c) attention. Laufer and Hulstijn (1998) found that first, writing a letter using a number of words already given requires a deeper level of processing than either receiving input that contains the target words or completing a fill-in-the-blank exercise with the target words (depth of processing); second, writing a letter with a number of words already provided draws the student's attention to the use of each of the words within the context of each letter and not within isolated sentences, and it also makes the student interact with the same word more than once (multiple encounters with the same word or number of attempts); third, the fact that the student has to write a letter employing certain words makes the student focus on them (attention). Nevertheless, in a later investigation carried out by Folse (1999) he concluded that those activities in which the students had to produce the target words did not cause a greater retention of the L2 vocabulary compared to a more controlled exercise, that is, a fill-in-the-blank exercise.

Finally, it has to be pointed out that the authors of these typologies do not specify if their proposals are valid for the teaching/learning of *one*-word lexical items and *multi*-word lexical items (e.g., lexical collocations) or only for *one*-word lexical items, taking into account that the knowledge of *multi*-word lexical items (e.g., collocational knowledge) does not evolve in parallel to the rest of the lexicon in an L2 (Gitsaki, 1996).

#### **4. Vocabulary Recycling**

Since L2 vocabulary acquisition is a gradual process, reviewing lexical items becomes a key factor. Nation (2001) argues that repetition carries not only quantitative but also qualitative benefits to vocabulary learning: “repetition is essential for vocabulary learning because there is so much to know about each word that one meeting with it is not sufficient to gain this information, and because vocabulary items must not only be known, they must be known well so that they can be fluently accessed.” (p. 76). However, Brown (1983) did not find any relationship between the learned words and the number of times that they appeared in a text. In addition, within vocabulary recycling it is important to distinguish among intervals, types, and number of exposures. Intervals between the different repetitions should increase over time (Pimsleur, 1967). In terms of types of repetition, elaborate expositions with the same word such as providing the adjectives that a noun occurs with may be more beneficial than bringing up the noun alone as in the first encounter (Stahl & Fairbanks, 1986). With respect to the number of encounters necessary to learn an L2 lexical item, there is no fixed one. Kachroo (1962) estimated that 7 or more repetitions were necessary to learn the new word. Later, in their study Saragi, Nation, and Meister (1978) concluded that participants needed 16 or more repetitions to learn a new lexical item. O’Dell (1997) advises that TBs recycle the vocabulary being taught more exhaustively since the probability of learning a new lexical item after only one encounter is between 5% and 10%. Authors such as Tomlinson (2008) and Dat (2008) among others denounce the fact that despite the amount of exercises included in the vocabulary sections within TBs, vocabulary recycling is usually overlooked.

#### **5. Vocabulary Learning Strategies**

Over the last 25 years the influence of communicative approaches is reflected in the emergence of L2 vocabulary learning strategies. Among the different reasons it should be pointed out that (a) success/failure when learning an L2 largely depends on the students’ actions rather than on their aptitudes, (b) vocabulary strategies could be defined in a precise way due to

the nature of vocabulary as an L2 area, and (c) students regard the study of vocabulary as important (Schmitt, 1997).

Research has identified different vocabulary learning strategies such as the keyword method, inference of meaning from context, and dictionary use, among others, and it has examined how these strategies are used, which students use them and whether training students in using them results in more vocabulary learning. Sanaoui (1995) conducted a study with French learners in British Columbia. She concluded that there is no one best vocabulary learning strategy and that the learners' proficiency level and type of instruction did not influence their vocabulary learning but rather the individual learners' approach to vocabulary learning. Regarding the type of students, Ahmed (1989), after surveying Sudanese EFL learners, found that the good students used more and more varied vocabulary learning strategies. As for the effect of instruction on vocabulary learning, the results have been rather mixed. There is a belief that language learning strategies have a teachability component so L2 students can benefit from learning strategies instruction (Oxford, 1990). However, a negative result was found when O'Malley (1987) investigated whether language instruction in a natural classroom setting would lead to improvement in speaking, listening, and vocabulary tasks. The students were divided in 3 groups, that is, the metacognitive strategies group, the cognitive strategies group, and the control group. The control group scored slightly higher than the treatment groups on the vocabulary tasks. These unexpected findings could be explained on the basis of the students' persistence in using strategies they were familiar with. They were unwilling to adopt the strategies they had been trained in only a few minutes earlier.

## **6. Glossaries with L1 Translation Equivalents**

In spite of the emergence of L2 vocabulary teaching over the last 3 decades, the presence of the students' L1 in vocabulary lists has remained relegated due to the influence exerted by communicative approaches. Nevertheless, empirical studies (Laufer & Shmueli, 1997; Grace, 1998; Lawley, in press) have shown the superiority of bilingual dictionaries when learning an L2.



Grace (1998) examined two groups of students in beginning-level first-and second- semester French classes. Those that were assigned to a CALL program in French with the option of English translation had a much higher retention rate than those in the CALL program without an English translation. The author concluded that translation was a helpful resource for L2 learners at the beginning level.

Laufer and Shmueli (1997) compared 4 ways of presenting the new vocabulary, that is, words presented in isolation, words in a meaningful sentence, words in a text context and words in an elaborated text context. Each of these ways contains half of the target words in the students' L1 and the other half was explained in English. The results indicate that the words with the L1 translation were retained better than those with the L2 explanation.

Lawley (in press) points out that bilingual word lists help students save time when learning new words as they do not need to understand the mechanics of new exercise types and they also aid students in learning independently of the teacher and other students.

## **7. The Study**

The present study analyzed 12 textbooks (TBs) for teaching English to speakers of other languages along with responses to 116 questionnaires completed by experienced EFL teachers in Spain. The 12 TBs included 4 books from 3 different proficiency levels, that is, beginning/elementary, intermediate, and advanced.

The aims of this study were, first, to analyze the selection, presentation, and practice of one-word lexical items as well as other lexical aspects such as vocabulary recycling, vocabulary learning strategies, and the inclusion of vocabulary lists with L1 translation equivalents in all 12 TBs, and second, to compare the treatment given to those aspects in the selected TBs with the EFL teachers' perceptions of that treatment in equivalent TBs that they had recently used or were using at their schools.

### 7.1. The Instruments Used

The 12 TBs were aimed at young adults and adults and were published between 1997 and 2007 by European publishers. All TBs were designed for general L2 (i.e., not for intensive language study or specific purposes). The TBs were also required to have explicit vocabulary sections not shared with any language skills (e.g., reading or writing) or components (e.g., grammar, pronunciation, etc.). An additional requirement was for the TBs to cover at least 3 skills besides the grammatical and lexical components.

The different vocabulary exercises/activities were analyzed following a typology based on the relative degree of control over the answer. The typology consisted of 5 activity types: (a) mechanical exercise: explicit comprehension of lexical items is not necessary; there is only one correct answer (e.g., completing a word with the missing vowels and/or consonants); (b) closed exercise: a greater degree of comprehension of the target vocabulary is needed, and there is still only one valid answer (e.g., fill-in-the-blank exercises); (c) open activities: students are required to understand the target vocabulary, there are two or more valid answers and there may or may not be explicit information gaps (e.g., question-and-answer activities based on the target vocabulary, giving definitions of target vocabulary); (d) communicative activity: there is an open answer and/or a lexical choice that is necessary to complete the activity, along with explicit information gaps; the instructions ask students to interact with each other to achieve a predetermined final outcome which may not be reached individually (e.g., writing advertisements in pairs using the vocabulary provided); and (e) ambiguous exercise/activity: it is a single exercise or activity which contains features of more than one of the previously mentioned categories.

The questionnaires were distributed among EFL teachers in Spanish high schools, universities, and official language schools in Seville and western Andalusia. The teachers based their answers on the TB they were most familiar with. These TBs were also aimed at young adults and adults, designed for non-intensive/non-specific study, and should include at least 3 language skills apart from the grammatical and lexical components. The

answers to the different statements of the questionnaire were measured following a frequency scale. The scale included these 5 options: *N/A=Don't know/ does not apply*, *1=No/never*, *2=occasionally*, *3=frequently*, *4=Yes/always*.

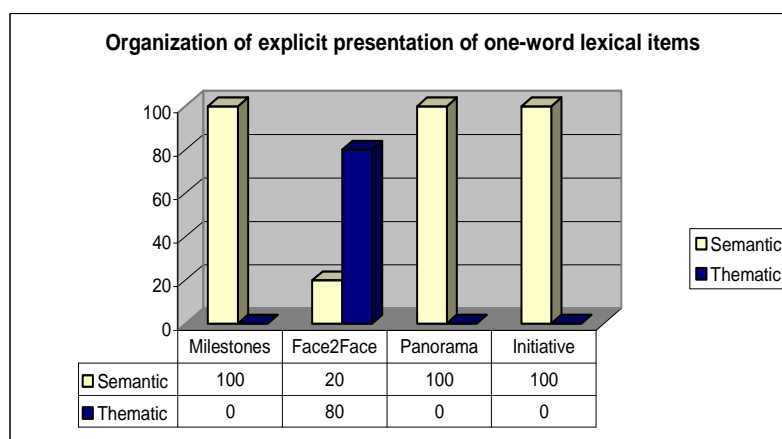
## **7.2. Results**

### **Results from the analysis of the textbooks**

As a starting point, with respect to the selection of the vocabulary to be taught, the results show that in only 1 of the 12 TBs (8.33%) analyzed the source of the vocabulary dealt with is identified (in this case *The Cambridge International Corpus* and *The Cambridge Learner Corpus*).

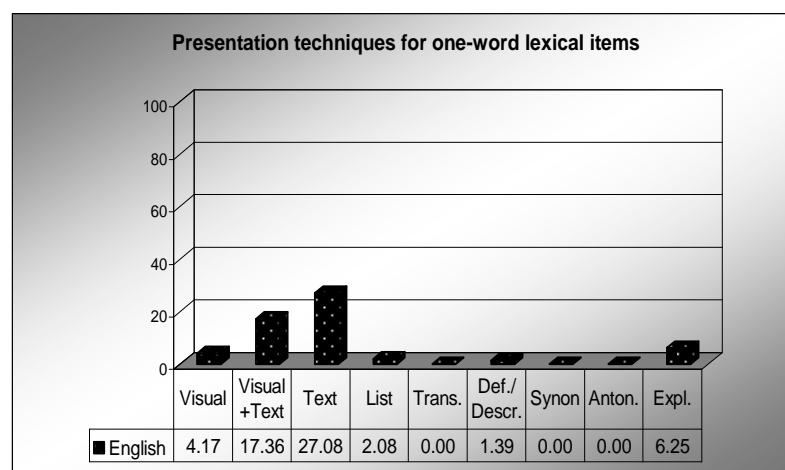
Regarding the explicit presentation of one-word lexical items, the average number of teaching units that explicitly introduce one-word lexical items is 11.04%. The percentage of explicit presentation of these units is smaller in the beginning TBs (3.75%) compared to the other levels, that is, intermediate (16.67%) and advanced (12.71%) TBs. Furthermore, those TBs that explicitly introduce the new vocabulary organize it mostly through semantic sets (see graph 1).

Graph 1i



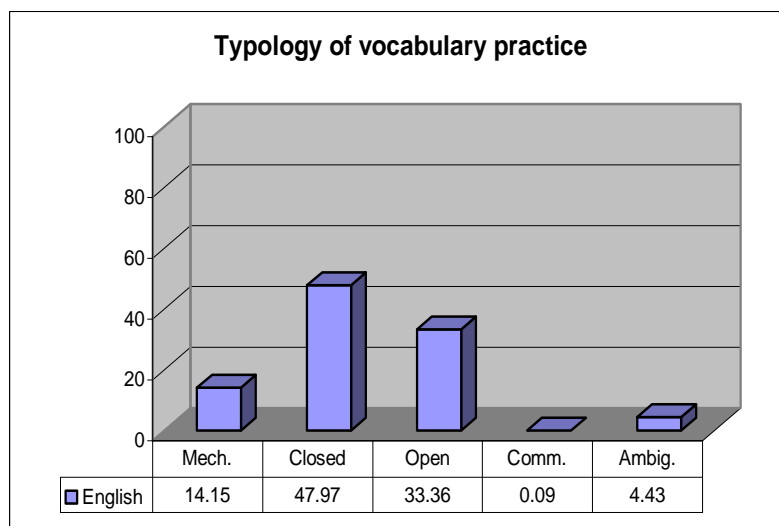
In terms of presentation techniques, there is a lack of variety in the techniques employed for the introduction of one-word lexical items. The most widely-used presentation techniques are texts and texts accompanied by drawings or pictures to clarify the content of the texts themselves. There is no use of translation into the students' L1, synonyms or antonyms (see graph 2).

Graph 2



With respect to vocabulary practice, there is a smaller percentage of teaching units that practice one-word lexical items in the advanced TBs (52.5%) as compared with beginning/elementary (100%) and intermediate TBs (93.75%). The practice intended for one-word lexical items is mostly comprised of closed exercises (47.97%) and open activities (33.36%), whereas communicative activities are almost non-existent (0.09%) (see graph 3).

Graph 3



Concerning other lexical aspects, the percentage of teaching units that recycle the vocabulary already taught in the TBs is 66.81%. In the advanced TBs there are fewer teaching units (48%) that recycle vocabulary than in the beginning/elementary and intermediate TBs (68% and 83.33%, respectively). On the other hand, the teaching units that contain vocabulary learning strategies are scarce (11.6%). Finally, vocabulary lists with L1 translation equivalents are non-existent in the beginning/elementary and advanced TBs and only 25% of the intermediate TBs contain them.

### Results from the questionnaires

As for the vocabulary selection, the EFL teachers who completed the questionnaires estimate that explicit vocabulary selection criteria appear in 22.9% of the TBs.

With regard to vocabulary presentation, the teachers believe that explicit presentation of lexical items is frequent in TBs (3.17: 1=*No/never*, 2=*occasionally*, 3=*frequently*, 4=*Yes/always*). They also estimate that it is less frequent in advanced TBs (3) compared to beginning/elementary (3.34) and intermediate ones (3.15). Furthermore, the EFL teachers consider that only *occasionally* (2.61) there is 'enough variety' of presentation techniques in TBs.

With respect to vocabulary practice, the EFL teachers estimate that 'enough variety' is present *occasionally*, or close to *frequently* (2.85) in the type of vocabulary practice found in the TBs they are most familiar with (1=*No/never*, 2=*occasionally*, 3=*frequently*, 4=*Yes/always*).

Turning attention to other lexical aspects, the EFL teachers interviewed consider that TBs *frequently* recycle the new vocabulary (3.16: 1=*No/never*, 2=*occasionally*, 3=*frequently*, 4=*Yes/always*). In addition, they think that 'enough recycling' only takes place *occasionally*, being advanced TBs the ones which are thought to contain less 'enough recycling' (beginning/elementary TBs=2.86; intermediate TBs=2.71; advanced TBs=2.38). In terms of vocabulary learning strategies, the EFL teachers believe that they appear *occasionally* (2.02: 1=*No/never*, 2=*occasionally*, 3=*frequently*, 4=*Yes/always*). Finally, the EFL teachers are of the opinion that vocabulary lists with L1 translations are present in 30% of intermediate TBs and they are hardly used in beginning/elementary TBs (3%) and are non-existent in advanced ones (0%).

## 8. Discussion

Starting with the selection of one-word lexical items, the results of the analysis show that in only 1 TB the vocabulary selection criteria used are specified. The EFL teachers that answered the questionnaires corroborate the scarcity of explicit vocabulary selection criteria. It is possible that in the rest of the TBs in which the selection criteria are not specified the TB writers randomly chose the new vocabulary.

As regards the presentation of the new vocabulary, the small percentage of teaching units (11.04%) that explicitly introduce one-word lexical items added to the fact that texts with or without visual aids are the most-widely used presentation techniques for one-word lexical items could be the result of the influence exerted by communicative approaches. They encouraged the use of the naturalness of context to teach the new vocabulary. However, as some experimental studies have revealed (Nagy & Herman, 1987), inferring meanings from context is less effective than more intensive or explicit forms of instruction. In addition, the absence of translations into the students' L1 as a presentation technique in the TBs analyzed could also be a direct consequence of the influence of communicative approaches which advocated for the total exclusion of the students' L1. Thus, they could be exposed to the L2 to a greater extent. Besides, the absence of the students' L1 could have been motivated by economic reasons since it is considerably more profitable to publish a TB that can be sold in many countries than to adapt the same book to a local context (Lawley, 2000). Conversely, the EFL teachers' opinions do not reflect the lack of explicit presentation of the new vocabulary, indeed they believe that the explicit introduction of new items is frequent. Nevertheless, they estimate that only *occasionally* there is 'enough variety' of presentation techniques. This mismatch between the results of the analysis and the teachers' views on the explicit presentation of the new vocabulary may be due to the fact that the EFL teachers have expressed their opinions on the explicit presentation of lexical items in general rather than on the explicit presentation of a specific type of lexical item, namely, one-word lexical items. Finally, the overuse of semantic sets to organize the explicit presentation of one-word lexical items seems to follow a popular belief based on the idea that semantic sets help learners remember the words and their meanings (Folse, 2004). In addition, Folse (2004) states that it is easy to write materials from semantic sets. Nevertheless, research has shown that semantic sets actually hinder and impede learning (Tinkham, 1993, 1997; Waring, 1999).

As far as the practice of one-word lexical items is concerned, the smaller percentage of vocabulary practice in advanced TBs may have its origin in an emphasis on pragmatics and cultural aspects in detriment to lexical ones. With respect to the typology of exercises/activities, there is an



imbalance in the number of mechanical exercises, closed exercises, open activities, and communicative activities, being the closed exercises the most frequent ones. This situation is described by Rixon (2000, p. 67) when she states that “many textbooks include activities that involve manipulating language in a rather mechanical way [...]. Many vocabulary activities involve little more than slot-filling within an obvious grammar context, or identifying and matching a word to a picture cue or other obvious context.” In this way, Tomlinson (2008) points out that ESL materials do not reflect the process of acquiring an L2 since most of the practice does not go beyond memorization, repetition, substitution, and transformation. On the other hand, the teachers surveyed believe that *occasionally* there is ‘enough variety’ in the vocabulary practice. This answer could be explained in a twofold way: (a) the presence of open activities may have been thought to have provided some variety and (b) the teachers could have considered that, for example, two closed exercises (such as a fill-in-the-blank exercise and a matching exercise) which are different from the point of view of their design but not from the perspective of their nature itself, bring some variety to the vocabulary practice.

In terms of other lexical aspects, in the case of vocabulary recycling it is difficult to estimate how much review it is necessary, although it could be stated that the more frequently students are exposed to L2 lexical items, the more likely it is for a specific L2 word to remain in long-term memory. In this respect, the EFL teachers interviewed believe that TBs only *occasionally* contain ‘enough recycling’. Regarding recycling and TBs’ proficiency levels, a possible reason for the fewer teaching units that recycle the new vocabulary in the advanced TBs analyzed could be found in the belief that TB writers may have deemed that advanced level students need less encounters with the words already taught. However, this belief lacks scientific rigor. Moreover, the teachers’ views also confirm that in advanced TBs ‘enough recycling’ takes place less frequently. In the case of sections with vocabulary learning strategies, they are insufficient in the TBs. In addition, the teachers also believe that they only appear *occasionally*. Thus, learner autonomy is hardly promoted due to the limited presence of vocabulary learning strategies. Finally, the scarcity of vocabulary lists with L1 translation equivalents found in the TBs analyzed is also reflected in the results of the questionnaires. This scarcity may be due to economic and

methodological reasons. As it was claimed above, it is more profitable to publish a TB that can be sold in different countries rather than to adapt that TB to a local context, for example, including the students' L1 (Lawley, 2000). On the other hand, communicative approaches advocated for the exclusive use of the L2 in the classroom. Nonetheless, empirical studies have shown that the use of bilingual dictionaries is conducive to L2 learning.

### **9. Conclusions and Pedagogical Implications**

To conclude, the treatment given to the selection, presentation, practice, vocabulary learning strategies, and glossaries with L1 translation equivalents in current EFL TBs is rather traditional since the results from recent empirical studies are hardly taken into consideration. In terms of vocabulary selection, most of the TBs lack systematicity as the selection criteria are not specified in the description of the TBs. Besides, most of the TBs organize the explicit presentation of new lexical items through semantic sets. However, research indicates that thematic presentations aid retention of new vocabulary. As for the presentation techniques employed, the absence of the students' L1 is an indicative of the preference given to economic benefits in detriment to pedagogical ones, although L1 translation equivalents are an effective way of learning the L2 vocabulary. Concerning vocabulary practice, communicative activities are almost non-existent whereas closed exercises from traditional teaching methods comprise nearly half of the vocabulary practice. Lastly, with respect to other lexical aspects, learner autonomy is not encouraged since vocabulary learning strategies and vocabulary lists with L1 translation equivalents are scarce in the TBs under scrutiny.

In spite of the fact that L2 vocabulary teaching has received a great amount of attention in the last 30 years, improvement in the treatment of lexical aspects in EFL TBs is necessary. First, vocabulary selection criteria should be made explicit to discourage selection based on TB writers' intuitions. Second, more explicit presentation is advisable especially in the case of beginning TBs together with more variety of presentation techniques including the use of the students' L1. Third, it is highly recommended that thematic sets adopt a more relevant role in the introduction of new words,

whereas semantic organizations make sense for reviewing items. Fourth, although controlled exercises are necessary in the vocabulary practice, communicative activities merit more than an anecdotal presence in current EFL TBs. Last but not least, more sections with vocabulary learning strategies are suggested.

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i The organization of the presentation of one-word lexical items, that is, semantic versus thematic groupings, was analyzed in case the TB introduced the new vocabulary in an explicit way. In this study only 4 TBs (*Milestones*, *Face2Face*, *Panorama*, and *Initiative*) explicitly presented the new items.