

## Investigating EFL teachers' vocabulary teaching practices through reading comprehension

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### Abstract

The present study elaborates on how EFL teachers deal with unknown/unfamiliar words in reading comprehension. It involves sixty-nine (69) EFL teachers selected through the snowballing sampling technique. As a result, the study endeavours to answer the research question 'How familiar are EFL teachers with contextual clues used in reading comprehension for word meaning inferencing?' A questionnaire is used to collect the data. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected to enable qualitative, quantitative and mixed-methods analysis. Statistical Package in Social Services (SPSS), version 17.0 (2008) was deployed to process the data. The results have indicated that the majority of the teachers do not resort to contextual clues to teach vocabulary through reading. The results also showed that the majority of EFL teachers are not familiar with contextual clues used to infer word meanings through reading, and that many of them have not received any training on contextual clues used for the teaching of vocabulary through reading comprehension.

**Keywords:** EFL teachers, Vocabulary teaching/learning, Reading comprehension, Contextual clues, English as a foreign language (EFL).

### Résumé

La présente étude tente d'élaborer comment les enseignants de l'anglais comme langue étrangère gèrent les mots inconnus/non-familiers pendant les études de textes basées sur la lecture. Elle a impliqué 69 enseignants d'anglais sélectionnés à travers la technique de la boule de neige. Par conséquent, l'étude tente de répondre à la question : Quel est le niveau de familiarité des professeurs d'anglais aux indices contextuels utiliser pendant la lecture pour la déduction du sens des mots inconnus ? Un questionnaire a servi d'instrument de collecte de données qualitative

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et quantitative pour permettre une analyse mixed (qualitative et quantitative). Le logiciel SPSS (2008), version 17.0 a été déployé pour le traitement des données. Les résultats ont indiqué que la majorité des enseignants d'anglais ne se réfèrent pas aux indices contextuels pour enseigner le sens des mots inconnus et que bon nombre d'entre eux ne sont pas familiers aux indices contextuels utilisés pour la déduction de sens à travers la lecture. Beaucoup d'entre eux n'ont pas reçu de formation initiale sur l'exploitation des indices contextuels utilisés pendant la lecture pour la déduction du sens des mots.

**Mots-clés :** Enseignants d'anglais comme langue étrangère, Enseignement/apprentissage de l'anglais, Etude de texte basé sur la lecture, Indices contextuels clues, Anglais comme langue étrangère.

## Introduction

The mastery of vocabulary is pivotal in language learning (Apriliyanti *et al.*, 2019) and successful communication (Yunhao, 2011). Yet, the teaching of vocabulary receives little priority assuming that vocabulary would look after itself incidentally (Amiryousefi and Ketabi, 2011). Teachers' lack of competence about the best practice makes vocabulary teaching problematic (Berne and Blachowicz, 2011). This situation urges language researchers to devote much energy to vocabulary (Breder *et al.*, 1988) showing the need to test the effect of training methods on vocabulary development (Ostovar and Malekpur, 2015). In spite of the important body of research on contextual vocabulary learning and reading by scholars such as Mohammadzadeh *et al.* (2016), Pretorius (2000), Niwa (2019), Al-Jamal (2018), Shahrokni (2009), Sinyashina (2020), Ahmadi (2017), Karami and Bowles (2019), Cetinavc (2014), Ahmad *et al.* (2018), Torabian *et al.* (2015), Jamali (2015), Tajik (2018), Fadilah (2019), the scarcity of studies on vocabulary teaching practices remains a serious problem worth considering. The English Inspectorate (2003), a manual on English teaching in Burkina, has come to the conclusion that teachers grant little room to vocabulary teaching. From this postulate, we have observed in our environment of study that vocabulary development is not emphasized during reading comprehension lessons in most EFL classrooms. The focus is on the global comprehension which may be hindered by the misunderstanding of some key vocabulary words in the text. The purpose of this study is to shed light on teachers' vocabulary teaching practices through reading comprehension. To achieve this purpose, we have looked at how teachers deal with contextual clues and

how familiar they are with contextual clues used for vocabulary teaching through reading comprehension. The study is conducted using two theories. The first one is the behaviourism theory by Vygotsky (1978). This theory assumes that teachers' thinking guides their behaviours and their conscious decisions during their teaching because of the teaching and learning theories that they have in their minds, (Clark, 1986, cited in Jahangir and Masood, 2019). The second theory is the lexical inferencing approach including Oxford and Crookall's (1990) fully contextualizing strategies. The second one indicates that learners can gain self-reliance in the process of vocabulary learning and move away from dependency on a dictionary and teachers (Ahmad *et al.*, 2018). Conceptually speaking, the focus is on EFL teachers' vocabulary teaching practices in relationship with the following seven contextual clues used in reading comprehension: synonymous clues, contrast / antonymous clues, morphological / derivational / structure clues, definitional / paraphrasal / restatement / description clues, example / explanation clues, L1 / L2-related clues, thematic / collocational clues.

### 1. Literature review

In a documentary research, Restrepo-Ramos (2015) has discussed the effectiveness of teachers' incidental focus on form in vocabulary learning and has reported that their involvement in lexically-oriented focus on form episodes is effective for learners' noticing and subsequent use and learning of vocabulary items. This study has dealt with incidental vocabulary learning in English as a Foreign Language as it relied on reading activities. Yet, the findings are limited because they have shed no light on the teachers' exploitation of contextual clues.

In a case study by Bado (2014), the effectiveness of EFL vocabulary knowledge improvement based on video games has been reported by the teachers among other learning outcomes such as motivation, attention, relevance, confidence and satisfaction. One problem with these results is that they depict the teachers' beliefs about vocabulary teaching based on video games, not their vocabulary teaching practices.

Oktan and Kaymakamoglu's (2017) study has revealed that there is consistency between EFL students' and EFL teachers' perspectives in all the categories of literary texts including vocabulary enrichment. From the students' perspectives, the findings of the study firstly have shown that

using literary texts helps students' vocabulary learning in a beneficial way. The findings of this study are also problematic because reading classes were integrated as demonstration lessons but they have not helped too much in elucidating the results about the effect of literary texts on vocabulary in the EFL classrooms.

Utami and Suharyadi's (2021) descriptive qualitative research has involved five teachers of English; three junior high school teachers and two senior high school teachers. The data collection instruments have been an observation checklist, field note, and interview guide. Descriptive qualitative and comparative approaches have been used to analyse data. The findings have revealed that teachers themselves lack vocabulary for their teaching activities and that repetition and drilling are the strategies adopted to help students remember the vocabulary taught in class.

Jahangir and Masood's (2019) study has investigated the differences between second language (L2) vocabulary teaching beliefs and practices of novice and experienced EFL teachers. Hundred (100) male and female non-native English-speaking teachers participated in the study selected out of the huge population of EFL teachers in different institutes in Tehran. The data collection instruments have been a novice and experienced teacher questionnaire, a questionnaire of teachers' beliefs about L2 vocabulary learning and teaching and an in-depth classroom observation. The results of statistical analysis have indicated that there is no significant difference between the beliefs and practices of teachers in terms of L2 vocabulary teaching. However, there are significant differences among the externally observed practice (EOP), self-perceived practices (SPP) and self-perceived beliefs (SPB) total scores. Moreover, on the whole, teachers' EOP is significantly different from and lower than their SPP and SPB. The results have also revealed that novice and experienced teachers differ significantly in terms of their SPB total scores and experienced teachers have a significantly higher SPB than novice teachers.

Pham (2022) has examined the perceptions of teachers and students on the qualities of a good EFL teacher and whether there are differences in their views. The participants are 22 English teachers aged 28-40 and 80 English-majored students aged 18-22 at a Vietnamese university. They are chosen by a random sampling technique with a total number of 102. At the time of conducting the study, English teachers had at least 5 years of teaching experience while students were in their third and fourth year of

university. A questionnaire and a semi-structured interview have served for the data collection. The questionnaire has been sent to some participants via Google Forms and a face-to-face interview has been made with some other six participants (three teachers and three students). The results have revealed that both teachers and students perceive the knowledge of language teaching as the most considerable ( $M=4.28/5.0$ ,  $SD=.38$ ). Although teachers' and students' perceptions have major similarities, there are some differences between their views from quantitative and qualitative findings. The review of the related literature has revealed gaps that limit the findings of previous related studies. Considering these gaps, the following research methods are deployed in this survey study.

## 2. Research methods

This survey has been conducted in Boussé and Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. It has involved a sample of sixty-nine (69) EFL teachers who have been selected through the snowballing sampling technique. The data collection instrument is a questionnaire that contains ten main questions and seven sub-questions that relate to the seven contextual clues being investigated. The questionnaire has been designed in such a way that teachers have to answer some of the questions by ticking in squares depending on their vocabulary teaching practices. Some other questions have required the teachers to tick in either yes/no-squares and then comment on their answers. Five copies of the questionnaire have been used with five EFL teachers for a pilot which enables us to test its reliability and validity.

As a collection procedure, we have made a hundred copies of the questionnaire which the teachers have to fill in and return within a period of one week. The teachers have received the questionnaire via their heads of school. It was possible for the heads or teachers to make copies of the questionnaire and give it to other EFL teachers who were willing to fill it in. The data collection started on October 25, 2021, and ended on January 21, 2022.

Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods approaches are deployed for the data analysis. The rationale for using these 3 approaches is to examine the study results from various angles of vision. In the questionnaire, the answers to questions 1, 2, and 10 are analysed

quantitatively using descriptive statistics with a special focus on the frequencies of the variables. The data are coded and processed using the SPSS (Statistical Package in Social Services) software version 17.0 (2008). The answers to questions 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 are analysed qualitatively using narrative descriptions. This consists of carefully exploring the different copies of the questionnaire. In other words, all the qualitative data should be read or looked at to provide a general sense of the information and an opportunity to reflect on its overall meaning. This approach served to make an in-depth analysis of the data for possible perspectives on contextual clues in an EFL learning context. First, the data are transcribed, typed and organised into corpuses depending on their sources. Each corpus is, then, interpreted to generate a possible meaning in relationship with the theme.

The mixed-methods approach mainly concerned the data from the teacher-questionnaire. This method was deployed to address the issue of their vocabulary teaching practices and the use of contextual clues through reading comprehension. The method consists of processing the data quantitatively while looking for possible justifications that could derive from the comments made by the teachers. With this approach, the data are processed using descriptive statistics considering the frequencies of the contextual clues in accordance with the teachers' answers and comments on the questionnaire and the student participants' answers and comments on the semi-structured interviews. With the mixed methods approach the SPSS (Statistical Package in Social Services) software version 17.0 (2008) is also deployed for the treatment of the data from the questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews. The rationale for using the mixed-methods approach is to have an in-depth understanding of various aspects of the training on contextual clues in an EFL learning context.

To validate the results, if EFL teachers claim that they resort to a contextual clue to teach unknown/unfamiliar word meanings and correctly describe that contextual clue used in reading then they are familiar with this category of clues in our area of study.

### 3. Results

#### 3. 1. How do EFL teachers deal with vocabulary?

**Table 1: Results on EFL Teachers' Vocabulary Teaching Practices**

How do you help your students learn the meanings of unknown/unfamiliar words in texts that you use for reading comprehension lessons?	Freq.	Percent.	Cum. Percent.
I teach the unknown/unfamiliar words in isolation before using the text.	8	11.6	11.6
I explain the unknown/unfamiliar words in foot notes.	14	20.3	31.9
I guide students to the use of contextual clues for the understanding of the unknown/unfamiliar words.	16	23.2	55.1
I translate the unknown/unfamiliar words.	13	18.8	73.9
I adapt the unknown/unfamiliar words.	3	4.3	78.3
More than one strategy used at a time.	14	20.3	98.6
No answer	1	1.4	100.0
Total	69	100.0	

Source: Field data, 2022

The results in the table above show that out of sixty-nine EFL teachers, 11.6% of them select the unknown/unfamiliar words and teach them in isolation before using the text for the reading comprehension lesson. 20.3% of the teachers claim that they explain the words in footnotes. 23.2% of the teachers assert that they guide the students to use contextual clues for the understanding of unknown/unfamiliar words. 18.8% of the teachers translate the unknown/unfamiliar words either in the student's first language or in French. 4.3% of the teachers adapt the unknown/unfamiliar words to the level of the students. 20.3% use more than one strategy at a time. 1.4% of the teachers have not answered the question. With regard to these findings, it is obvious that the majority of EFL teachers do not teach vocabulary using contextual clues in reading. It was necessary to find out whether the teachers who claim that they resort to contextual clues to help their students infer unknown/unfamiliar word meanings in reading are actually familiar with these clues. The results are displayed in tables in the section below.



### 3. 2. How familiar are EFL teachers with contextual clues in reading

**Table 2: EFL teachers' familiarity with synonymous clues in reading**

Do you resort to synonymous clues to teach vocabulary through reading?	Freq.	Percent .	Cum. Percent.
Yes, with the right description of the process of using synonymous clues	4	5.8	5.8
Yes, with the wrong description of the process of using synonymous clues	52	75.4	81.2
No	13	18.8	100.0
Total	69	100.0	

Source: Field data, 2022

The results, in the table above, indicate that 5.8% of teachers have said that they resort to synonymous clues to teach vocabulary in reading and correctly described the process of using these clues in reading, 75.4% have claimed they use the clues but they have wrongly described the process of using the clues, and 18.8% have overtly said that they resort to these clues. Corpus A below exemplifies the approximate right descriptions provided by teachers (5.8%) who have claimed that they resort to synonymous clues.

#### Corpus A

- *Find the correct synonym of each word in the text (paragraphs are given to them).* (sic)
- *I find the words that are synonymous in the text and I tell the pupils to identify them.* (sic)
- *By using the synonyms of the words in relation to their contextual meanings.* (sic)
- *I identify the keywords that can help them understand the text and I find their synonyms in context.* (sic)

Corpus B illustrates the wrong descriptions provided by the teachers (75.4%) who have falsely claimed that they resort to synonymous clues.

#### Corpus B

- *Word matching: find the correct synonym of each word in the text. Paragraphs are given to them.* (sic)
- *I use the words the pupils are already familiar with; for example: tomatoes, onions ... are vegetables.* (sic)



- *I draw the students' attention on words that are supposed to be difficult. Then, I give the easier synonyms of the words so that they can understand.* (sic)
- *I replace the unknown word with synonymous ones in simple sentences.* (sic)
- *I provide a synonym to the new word and give an illustrative sentence.* (sic)
- *I use a synonym of the unknown/unfamiliar word to explain it in the context.* (sic)

Synonymous clues are words or groups of words with similar meanings given in the text to help the reader understand other word meanings. The teachers who claim that they resort to synonymous clues to teach vocabulary must necessarily guide the students to exploit these clues for the understanding of the unknown/unfamiliar words in the text. The descriptions provided by the teachers in corpus B above neither entail the definition of synonymous clues nor correspond to the practices related to the exploitation of synonymous clues. Most of these descriptions refer to the use of synonyms with pair lists as a decontextualizing technique. The limits of this technique of vocabulary teaching are that synonyms sometimes miss some important information about the words and lead learners to use them inappropriately (Mohammadzadeh *et al.*, 2016). The actual cumulative percentage of the teachers who do not resort to synonymous clues is 94.2%. This percentage is composed of 75.4% of teachers who claim that they use the clues but they do not and 18.8% of those who admit that they do not resort to the clues. That cumulative percentage (94.2%) indicate that the majority of the teachers are unfamiliar with the use of synonymous clues in reading.

**Table 3: EFL teachers' familiarity with antonymous clues in reading**

Do you resort to antonymous clues to teach vocabulary through reading?	Freq.	Percent.	Cum. Percent.
Yes, with right description of the process of antonymous clues	1	1.4	1.4
Yes, with wrong description of the process of antonymous clues	41	59.4	60.9
No	25	36.2	97.1
No answer	2	2.9	100.0
Total	69	100.0	

Source: Field data, 2022

In the table above, 1.4% of the teachers have claimed that they resort to antonymous clues to teach vocabulary in reading and correctly describe the way of using the clues, 59.4% have falsely claimed that they use antonymous but they are unable to describe the way of using these clues, 36.2% of them have overtly admitted that they do not use these clues, 2.9% of them have not given any answer.

An assertion, such as *I find the words in the text and I tell the pupils to identify the opposites of these words* as an approximate right description of the way of using antonymous clues, has been made by the teachers (1.4%).

Corpus C below contains some illustrations of wrong descriptions of the process of using the antonymous clues provided by the teachers (59.4%) who have falsely claimed they resort to these clues.

### Corpus C

- *Word matching: circle out the correct antonym from a list of words. Texts are used as supports.* (sic)
- *By adding affixes plus the negative mark; poor = not rich; polite = not impolite.* (sic)
- *I use the words the pupils are already familiar with; for example: the opposite of quick is slow, of tall is short.* (sic)
- *I select the word which can easily be understood through their antonyms. Then, I provide students with appropriate antonyms. e.g. healthy ≠ sick.* (sic)
- *I first pronounce the word and then ask the students to do so. Afterwards, I ask a volunteer and if he fails, I give the antonym.* (sic)
- *Provide an antonym to the unknown word by explaining that it is an opposite, then, give an illustrative sentence.* (sic)

Antonymous clues are words with opposite meanings given in the text to help the reader understand the meanings of other words. The teachers who have claimed that they resort to antonymous clues to teach vocabulary must guide the students to exploit these clues for the understanding of the unknown/unfamiliar words in the text. The descriptions in corpus C above neither entail the definition of antonymous clues nor correspond to the practices related to the exploitation of antonymous clues. It means that even the 59.4% of the teachers have falsely stated that they resort to antonymous clues to teach the meanings of unknown/unfamiliar words but they do not actually do it. Consequently, the actual cumulative percentage of teachers who do not resort to antonymous clues becomes 95.6%. This percentage is stratified into 59.4% of teachers who have claimed that they use the clues but they

do not and 36.2% of those who have admitted that they do not resort to the clues. That cumulative percentage (95.6%) is evidence that the majority of the teachers are unfamiliar with the use of antonymous clues in reading.

**Table 4: EFL teachers' familiarity with morphological/derivational clues in reading**

Do you resort to morphological/derivational clues to teach vocabulary through reading?	Freq.	Percent.	Cum. Percent.
Yes, with the right description of the process of using morphological/derivational clues	6	8.7	8.7
Yes, with wrong description of the process of using the description of morphological/derivational clues	23	33.3	42.0
No	40	58.0	100.0
Total	69	100.0	

Source: Field data, 2022

In the table above, 8.7% of the teachers have claimed that they resort to morphological/derivational clues to teach vocabulary in reading and have correctly described the way of using the clues, 33.3% have falsely asserted that they use morphological/derivational clues but they have failed to describe the way of using these clues, and 58.0% of them have overtly admitted that they do not use these clues.

The sentences, in corpus D below, are examples of correct descriptions of using morphological/derivational clues proposed by the teachers (8.7%).

#### Corpus D

- *I proceed by explaining to them (students) the composition of the word. (sic)*
- *Students are first taught the meaning of some prefixes or suffixes. Students discover the root word and then the meaning. (sic)*
- *When I dealt with the reading comprehension lesson with the students and I noticed that they have not understood we select together the difficult (words) and I tried to give them the roots of each word if it is a derivational one. If it is not, I only give them (students) its meaning in French. (sic)*
- *I decompose the new word into prefix/base/suffix and then explain the meanings of the prefix, the suffix, and the base. Through this, they guess the meaning of the unfamiliar words. (sic)*

The sentences, in corpus E below, are examples of wrong descriptions of using morphological/derivational clues proposed by the teachers (33.3%) who have falsely claimed that they resort to the clues.

### Corpus E

- *I sometimes teach them (students) the prefixes and suffixes and show them (students) that they (prefixes and suffixes) influence the meaning of words. (sic)*
- *Word formation; for example, Verbs → Nouns: to sing (V) → a singer (N); to invite (V) → an invitation (N); to build (V) → building (N). (sic)*
- *I ask the students to find words from which the selected items derive. e.g.: 'riches' is a noun which derives from the adjective 'rich'. (sic)*
- *I listen to the definitions from the students and I keep the best one. If not, I give my own definition. (sic)*
- *The use of morphological and derivational words will help pupils to discover the meaning of the new words. (sic)*

A morphological/derivational clue consists of breaking/decomposing a word into smaller parts in order to understand its meaning. The teachers who have claimed that they resort to morphological/derivational clues to teach vocabulary must necessarily guide the students in breaking or decomposing the unknown/unfamiliar words into their basic components to derive the meanings. The descriptions provided by the teachers in corpus C above neither entail the definition of morphological/derivational clues nor correspond to the practices related to the exploitation of morphological/derivational clues. It implies that 33.3% of the teachers who have claimed that resort to morphological/derivational clues to teach the meanings of unknown/unfamiliar words do not actually do it. Consequently, the actual cumulative percentage of the teachers who do not resort to synonymous clues becomes 91.3%. This percentage is composed of 33.3% of teachers who have claimed that they use the clues but they do not and 58.0% of those who have admitted that they do not resort to the clues. That cumulative percentage (91.3%) proves that the majority of the teachers are unfamiliar with the use of morphological/derivational clues in reading.

**Table 5: EFL teachers' familiarity with definitional/restatement clues in reading**

Do you resort to definitional/restatement clues to teach vocabulary through reading?	Freq.	Percent.	Cum. Percent.
Yes, with the wrong description of the process of using definitional/restatement clues	45	65.2	65.2
No	21	30.4	95.7
No answer	3	4.3	100.0
Total	69	100.0	

Source: Field data, 2022

In the table above, 65.2% of the teachers have claimed that they resort to the definitional/restatement clues but they have wrongly described the process of using the clues, 30.4% of them have said that they do not resort to these clues, and 4.3% of the teachers have not said anything about the way of using these clues. Corpus F presents illustrative sentences of the teachers' wrong descriptions of how to use definitional/restatement clues as shown below.

#### Corpus F

- *By the use of expressions such as: the fact of ..., a person who ..., something that ...* (sic)
- *Through examples, a builder is a person who builds houses. A hair shampoo is a liquid for washing the hair.* (sic)
- *I give the definitions of the selected items to the students.* (sic)
- *Give a short and clear definition by thinking about the feature that capture and what contrasts to make.* (sic)
- *I give the definition in French.* (sic)
- *For the explanation of a new word I give them easy definitions that will allow them to understand its meaning.* (sic)

Neither do these descriptions provided by the teachers define definitional/restatement clues which are groups of words used in a text to help the reader understand other word meanings, nor correspond to how to use definitional/restatement clues. It is, therefore, assumed that 65.2% of the teachers have falsely claimed that they resort to

definitional/restatement clues to teach the meanings of unknown/unfamiliar words but they do not actually do it. Consequently, the actual cumulative percentage of the teachers who do not resort to definitional/restatement clues equals 95.7% with 4.3% of the teachers who have not given any answer to this question. The cumulative percentage (95.7%) indicates that the majority of the teachers are unfamiliar with the use of definitional/restatement clues in reading.

**Table 6: EFL teachers' familiarity with example/explanation clues in reading**

Do you resort to example/explanation clues to teach vocabulary through reading?	Freq.	Percent.	Cum. Percent.
Yes, with the wrong description of the process of using example/explanation clues	46	66.7	66.7
No	18	26.1	92.8
No answer	5	7.2	100.0
Total	69	100.0	

Source: Field data, 2022

In the table above, 66.7% of the teachers have asserted that they resort to the example/explanation clues but they are unable to describe correctly the process of using the clues, 26.1% of them have said that they do not use these clues, and 7.2% of them have not given any answer. Corpus G below exposes illustrative sentences of wrong descriptions provided by the teachers (66.7%) who have falsely claimed that they use these clues.

### Corpus G

- *By resorting to situations that are linked to students' social content. (sic)*
- *We proceed by giving examples using the unknown words in contextualised sentences. (sic)*
- *I use phrases, sentences the pupils can understand to explain or teach new vocabulary. (sic)*
- *Give a short, precise, and clear explanation of the new word then give an illustrative example. (sic)*
- *I proceed by giving examples related to the word and/or explain with the words. (sic)*
- *I use a pictorial example to allow the students to guess the word. (sic)*

None of these descriptions provided by the teachers neither entails the definition of example/explanation clues which are groups of words provided in a text to clarify the meanings of some other words nor corresponds to how to use example/explanation clues. Therefore, the 66.7% of the teachers do not actually resort to example/explanation clues to teach the meanings of unknown/unfamiliar words. These 66.7% combined with 26.1% of the teachers who have admittedly said that they do not resort to example/explanation clues actually becomes 92.8% corresponding to the cumulative percentage of the teachers. The cumulative percentage (95.7%) is undoubtedly evidence that the majority of the teachers are unfamiliar with the use of example/explanation clues in reading.

**Table 7: EFL teachers' familiarity with L1 or L2-related clues in reading**

Do you resort to L1/L2-related clues to teach vocabulary through reading?	Freq.	Percent .	Cum. Percent.
Yes, with the wrong description of the process of using L1/L2-related clues	24	34.8	34.8
No	40	58.0	92.8
No answer	5	7.2	100.0
Total	69	100.0	

Source: Field data, 2022

According to the results in the table above, 34.8% of the teachers have pointed out that they resort to L1/L2-related clues, 58.0% of them have claimed that they do not use L1/L2-related clues, and 7.2% of the teachers have not given any answer.

The teachers (34.8%) who have said that they use L1/L2-related clues have provided incorrect descriptions to indicate how they proceed when using these clues. Illustrative sentences of these teachers' incorrect descriptions are presented in Corpus H below.

#### Corpus H

- *Sometimes when the explanation of the word is very complicated, I just give the corresponding in L1 (rarely). (sic)*
- *Yes, we put these clues in practice through reading, speaking, and listening. (sic)*
- *By explaining the meaning of the unknown word in their mother tongues if they still do not understand. (sic)*



- *In my explanation in English, I use the word by saying “It is what is called in French ...” (sic)*
- *Pronounce it only the equivalent in another language that the students understand. (sic)*
- *When I find the definition in English difficult to understand, I just give the meaning in French. (sic)*

L1/L2-related clues are words or group of words in L1/L2 that resembles the English words and which guide the reader to understand the meanings of those English words in a text. The teachers who resort to these clues to teach vocabulary must be able to draw the students’ attention on the resemblance between the L1/L2 words and the unknown/unfamiliar words in the target language. Clearly none of the descriptions provided by the teachers neither requires the definition of L1/L2-related clues nor corresponds to how to use L1/L2-related clues. Therefore, the 34.8% of the teachers have claimed that they resort to L1/L2-related clues to teach the meanings of unknown/unfamiliar words but they do not actually do it. These 34.8% combined with 58.0% of the teachers who have admittedly said that they do not resort to L1/L2-related clues actually equal to 92.8% corresponding to the cumulative percentage. This cumulative percentage (92.8%) is enough evidence that the majority of the teachers are unfamiliar with the use of L1/L2-related clues in reading.

**Table 8: EFL teachers’ familiarity with thematic/collocational clues in reading**

Do you resort to thematic/collocational clues to teach vocabulary through reading?	Freq.	Percent	Cum. Percent.
Yes, with the wrong description of the process of using thematic/collocational clues	18	26.1	26.1
No	50	72.5	98.6
No answer	1	1.4	100.0
Total	69	100.0	

Source: Field data, 2022

According to the results in the table above, 26.1% of the teachers have said that they resort to thematic/collocational clues, 72.5% of them

have claimed that they do not use thematic/collocational clues, and 1.4% of the teachers have not given any answer. The teachers (26.1%) who have said that they use thematic/collocational clues provided incorrect descriptions to indicate how they proceed when using these clues. In Corpus I, there are examples of sentences of these teachers' incorrect descriptions.

### Corpus I

- *By giving a topic related to the vocabulary so that learners can familiarize with them.* (sic)
- *I highlight the selected items by informing students about the topic which is in connection with them.* (sic)
- *I ask the students to give the words or expressions which are likely to be related to the theme.*
- *I approach topical themes that we encounter in the texts.* (sic)
- *If I want to teach vocabulary on disease, I must choose a thematic which talks about this disease.* (sic)
- *When there is any theme that goes with the class.* (sic)

Thematic/collocational clues are lexical terms provided in the text to guide the reader to identify the theme. In other terms, they refer to knowledge of words that frequently occur together. The teachers who resort to thematic/collocational clues to teach vocabulary must be able to tell the students to consider the theme or the word co-occurrence for the understanding of unknown/unfamiliar words in the text. Obviously, none of the descriptions provided by the teachers entails such definitions of thematic/collocational clues nor corresponds to how to exploit thematic/collocational clues. Therefore, 26.1% of the teachers have falsely claimed that they resort to thematic/collocational clues to teach the meanings of unknown/unfamiliar words but they do not actually do it. These 26.1% combined with 72.5% of the teachers who have admittedly claimed that they do not resort to thematic/collocational clues actually give 98.6% as a cumulative percentage. This cumulative percentage (98.6%) is obvious evidence that the majority of the teachers are unfamiliar with the use of thematic/collocational clues in reading.

**Table 9: Issue of EFL teachers' training on VLS teaching in reading**

Have you got any training on the use of contextual clues in vocabulary teaching through reading?	Freq.	Percent.	Cum. Percent.
Yes	19	27.5	27.5
No	48	69.6	97.1
No answer	2	2.9	100.0
Total	69	100.0	

Source: Field data, 2022

The results displayed in the table above indicate that 27.5% of the teachers have claimed that they have received training on the use of contextual clues. 69.6% of them have said that they have not received any training as far as the contextual clues are concerned. 2.9% of the teachers have not answered the question. The percentage of the teachers (69.6%) who have not received any training on contextual clues is far above that of the teachers who have received training (27.5%). Based on these results, there is no doubt that the majority of the teachers are unfamiliar with contextual clues used in reading to elucidate unknown/unfamiliar words.

To recapitulate, the analysis of the data has yielded several results on EFL teachers' vocabulary teaching practices and contextual clues used for lexical inferencing in reading. First, 75.3% of the teachers do not teach vocabulary in reading using contextual clues. Second, 94.2% of the teachers are unfamiliar with the use of synonymous clues in reading. Third, 95.6% of the teachers are unfamiliar with the use of antonymous clues in reading. Fourth, 91.3% of the teachers are unfamiliar with the use of morphological/derivational clues in reading. Fifth, 95.7% of the teachers are unfamiliar with the use of definitional/paraphrasal clues in reading. Sixth, 95.7% of the teachers are unfamiliar with the use of example/explanation clues in reading. Seventh, 92.8% of the teachers are unfamiliar with the use of L1/L2-related clues in reading. Ninth, 98.6% of the teachers are unfamiliar with the use of thematic/collocational clues in reading. The average of these percentages (94.2%, 95.6%, 91.3%, 95.7%, 95.7%, 92.8%, and 98.6%) is 80.75%. Finally, 69.6% of the teachers have not received any training on contextual clues. Based on these findings, it is obvious that the majority of EFL teachers are not familiar with

contextual clues used for lexical inferencing in reading in our study context.

#### 4. Discussion of the results and pedagogical implications

The analysis of the data reveals incongruence between the teachers' claims and their vocabulary teaching practices in relationship to contextual clues used in reading. This finding is similar to that of Farhang and Amerian (2015) who found inconsistency between the teachers' beliefs about vocabulary and their teaching practices in a case study. It is also demonstrated through the high percentage (69.6%) that EFL teachers did not receive any initial training on contextual clues. The average percentage (80.75%) showing EFL teachers' unfamiliarity with contextual clues and the percentage (69.6%) of teachers untrained to exploit contextual clues for vocabulary learning in reading explain why vocabulary is put aside and sometimes left unexplored. According to the English Inspectorate (2003), a manual of English teaching in Burkina Faso, EFL teachers avoid teaching vocabulary. The vast majority of EFL teachers argue that one cannot teach vocabulary except as part of a lesson based on the study of a text used in listening or reading comprehension (The English Inspectorate, 2003). This argument means that teachers acknowledge the importance of vocabulary for listening and reading comprehension. Yet, they avoid vocabulary teaching because they lack the necessary strategies to teach it. These results imply that EFL teachers need initial training on the exploitation of contextual clues before going into teaching.

#### Conclusion

The present study has investigated EFL teachers' vocabulary teaching practices relating them to the exploitation of contextual clues used in reading comprehension. It is a way of promoting teacher training in order to help their students become independent learners of vocabulary. The study has yielded results demonstrating that EFL teachers do not resort to contextual clues to teach vocabulary through reading comprehension and that they are not familiar with these contextual clues. The results have also shown that EFL teachers need initial training on the exploitation of contextual clues. Therefore, we make the following recommendations. First, the curriculum of the teachers' training at professional schools must include modules on the strategies of contextual

vocabulary teaching based on reading comprehension. Second, teachers must be trained on how to exploit contextual clues to teach vocabulary. Finally, training sessions on contextual vocabulary teaching based on reading comprehension must be organized periodically to the benefit of in-service teachers as a way of recycling their vocabulary teaching methods.

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