

Investigating the Secondary School Students' Background Knowledge on How They Learn English Terminologies in their Classrooms at Tejee City

Dr. Abdussalam Saleh Tantani

Faculty of Arts, department of English, University of Zawia-Libya

Email: a.tantani@zu.edu.ly

Dr. Ahmed Rashed Zraga

Faculty of Education, department of English, University of Zentan -Libya

Ahmed Abdussalam Mabrouk Eswie

Higher Institute of Marine Sciences Techniques – Sabeatha-Libya

Email: eswei0077@gmail.com

Abstract

This study aims to know the students' experiences about learning English terminologies during their studies in the English language classroom at secondary school. The researchers used a structured questionnaire as a quantitative approach for data collection. The questionnaire is prepared to collect data about the students' knowledge of acquiring English terminologies. The sample was 67 students who were chosen randomly. The study's findings showed that most students did not learn English terminology through their early education. The reason was that the terms are not found in the Libyan curriculum at the primary and preparatory school levels, however, they are fewer in the secondary stage. Finally, the paper concluded with some recommendations.

Key Words:

Terminology, knowledge, secondary school. Curriculum

الملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى التعرف على تجارب الطلبة في تعلم المصطلحات الإنجليزية أثناء دراستهم اللغة الإنجليزية بالمرحلة الثانوية. وقد استخدم الباحثون استبانة لجمع البيانات. وقد تم إعداد الاستبانة لجمع البيانات حول ما مدى معرفة الطلبة حول اكتساب المصطلحات الإنجليزية. وكانت العينة 67 طالبًا تم اختيارهم عشوائيًا. وقد أظهرت نتائج الدراسة أن معظم الطلاب لم يتعلموا المصطلحات الإنجليزية من خلال تعلمهم في المراحل المبكرة. وكان السبب هو عدم وجود المصطلحات في المناهج اللببية في مرحلتي التعليم الابتدائي والإعدادي، إلا أنها أقل في المرحلة الثانوية. وأخيرًا، اختتمت الورقة ببعض التوصيات.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المصطلحات، المعرفة، المدرسة الثانوية، مناهج

1. Introduction

English, an international language, has become a major element of the education system in most countries. In some countries, English is spoken as the native language whereas in others English is only a foreign language. The use of English has increased in recent years around the world. In Libya, learning English is learned at all levels of education, from primary to University. The English curriculum has been developed during the last few years to consider the needs learning styles, and different intelligence of the students. Those curricula, which are out of the scope of this work, contain insufficient vocabulary sections from which learners can gain some techniques to facilitate vocabulary acquisition. This study deals with an important issue of learning the English language; that is related to learning English terminologies in English classrooms at secondary school. It is important to investigate this topic because terminologies are important for students at all the levels of Education system.

2. Literature Review

English is a global language for international air traffic control and maritime communication. Moreover, eighty percent of computer data are processed and stored in English, three-quarters of all telex messages and telegrams are sent in English, and half of the newspapers published in the world, namely five thousand newspapers, are published in English (Kitao. 1996). He added English terminology has been one of the most significant elements in learning English at some undergraduate level. Volin and Ushakov (1940, p.81) defined English terms as “a word or a collocation that is used to accurately express concepts specific to any field of knowledge, production, or culture, and that serves communicative needs in this field of human activity, is called a term”. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the students’ knowledge of learning terminologies in Libyan secondary students.

Moreover, technical vocabulary is defined as a vocabulary that occurs with very high or reasonable occurrence within a very limited range of texts or just within one text (Nation and Kyongho 1995). Technical words are not easy to distinguish and they are mostly “subject related” occurring in a “specialist domain” and are “part of a system of subject knowledge” (Chung and Nation 2004). Another definition provided by Voznjuk et al., (2010, 8) who stated that it is a term or a collocation that is coordinated with a clearly defined concept of a science, art, or social and enters a systemic relationship with other similar units of language, forming with them a particular system, or terminology.

Furthermore, certain researchers such as Cabré, (1999); Fernández et al., (2009); Schnell and Rodríguez, (2010); Alcina, (2011); Picht and Acuña, (1997); Hsu, (2013) highlighted the



importance of technical vocabulary which plays in the education of young students. They all agreed that specialist language has also been widely studied within the framework of terminology, in which the main educational focus is on training translators and interpreters as well as trainees from different knowledge areas. Gablasova (2015) argues that it is important to learn terminology in preparatory and secondary school because they need them in the next education (university level). Mežek et al., (2015) mention that both medium-combined teaching in an L2 and added exposure to subject-specific contents in the first language contributed to the acquisition of new terminology by undergraduates during the first year at a Swedish university. The researchers' experience through teaching English at different levels noted that the students learn general vocabulary across all levels of education, whereas learning technical and Science terminology has focused on undergraduate and postgraduate courses. Technical vocabulary in a second language (L2) is one major factor challenging students' achievement during the first years at university (Evans & Green, 2007; Hyland & Tse, 2007, 2009; Ward, 2009; Evans & Morrison, 2011; Cervetti et al., 2015; Mežek et al., 2015).

In addition, the literature also shows that many factors influence vocabulary acquisition. Lin (2014) states that these factors are external and internal. The external factors deal with environment, family, and culture, in the school. Through an environmental factor, the children can explore another language in their developmental period. The internal factor, in contrast, deals with individual differences such as personality, sex, experience, language style, language aptitude, and intrinsic motivation. Singleton and Ryan, (2004) argues that age can be another factor that affects for second language acquisition process. Steinberg said that the older learners second language will be slower than the children because they may reject the rules of the new community, so they also refuse to acquire a new language. Stefánsson (2013) investigated the process a second language is acquired. He explains about the age factor in learning another language than the mother tongue. Stefánsson also investigated the relationship between motivations, environment, and attitudes which can be the factor that influences second language acquisition. He found that this factor is not really true and can occur in every second language acquisition case. However, motivation and environment are known as an important role in the learning process rather than the age factor. In addition, using social strategies highly in vocabulary classes motivated learners to do better in learning words than those less motivated. Being motivated makes learners ready

to receive and learn new terms easily (Allwright and Bailey, 1994). This is because teaching and learning English terms seem to be essential to help students become proficient in vocabulary, which in turn, helps them to create sentences and communicate intensively with others (Nichols and Rupley, 2004). This indicates that vocabulary teachers should use and create more social strategies that lead to an increase students' English terms through interactive activities in their classes.

Lastly, Neuman and Dwyer (2009) argued that to learn a word, a learner is required to encounter a word many times before he/she knows it very well and be ready to use it; therefore, it becomes a part of his language reservoir (vocabulary bank). They suggested that the same process should be followed in classroom teaching later on. Hence, they conclude that unless children speak their language, it will be difficult for them to develop reading and writing. But before all of that they are required to identify and use some vocabulary first. Moreover, Zhang (2011) argued that there are more factors that contribute to teaching difficulties of new words. For example, the type of the word that is taught in terms of how complex is it in spelling or pronunciation. The relationship between words in context may also add to that difficulty.

3. Aim of the Study

This study aims to identify the students' background knowledge about learning English terminologies in their secondary school classrooms in Tejee City.

4. Research Question

- What are the students' background knowledge about learning English terminologies in secondary school classrooms?

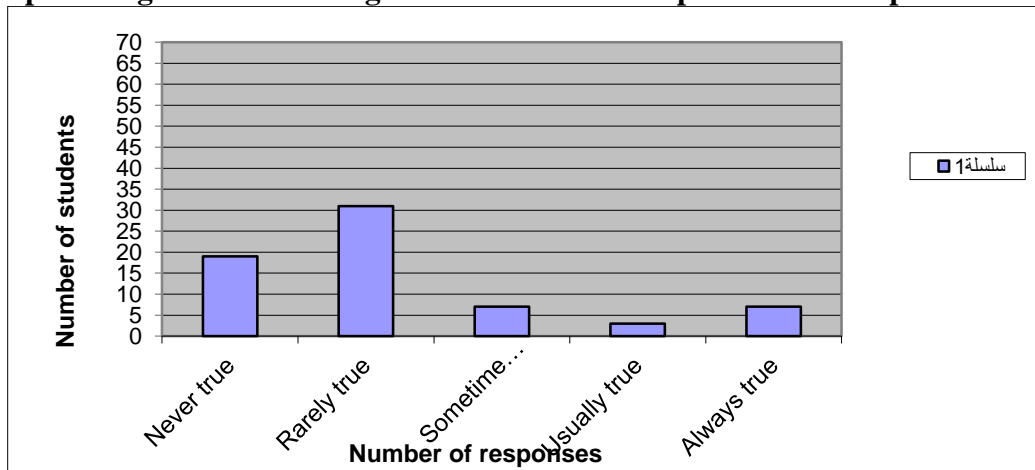
5. Methodology

The quantitative investigation method is used in this paper. Therefore, a structured questionnaire was used to collect the required data through 20 questions. Questionnaire responses are easily quantifiable and subjective to computation and mathematical analysis (Dornyei, 2010). The questionnaire is defined by Bell and Harris (1994: 64) as “a collection of written questions which are generally answered in the absence of the person who is collecting the information.” Also, Dornyei states: “The main attraction of questionnaires is their unprecedented efficiency in terms of (a) researcher time, (b) researcher effort, and (c) financial resources” (2003, p.9). Only sixty-seven students participated in this study. The respondents were all from secondary school in Tejee. The data gained was analysed by Excel software.

6. Data Analysis

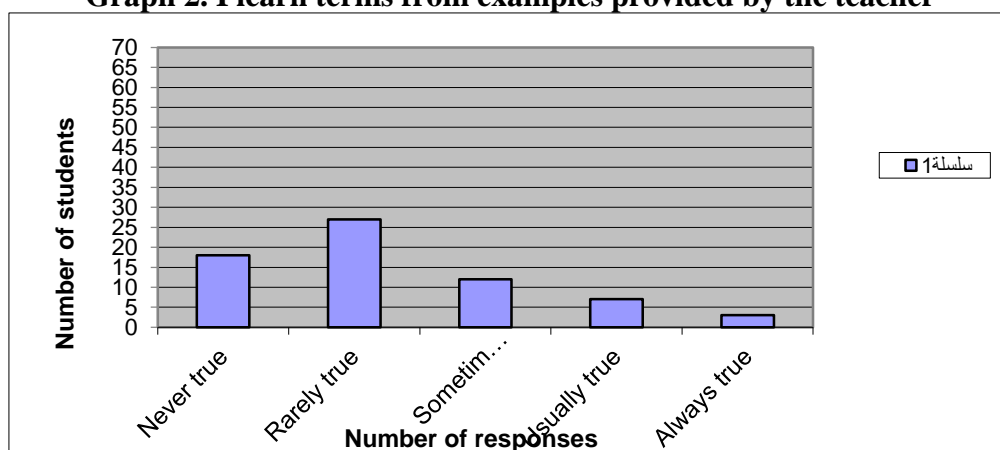
This section presents the analysed data gained from the questionnaire. The researchers have devised 16 questionnaire items to discover students' knowledge about how they acquire English terminologies during their studies in the English language classroom. Each question was on a 5-point Likert scale from “never true” to “always true”.

Graph 1. I agree that learning new terms should be presented in a specific context



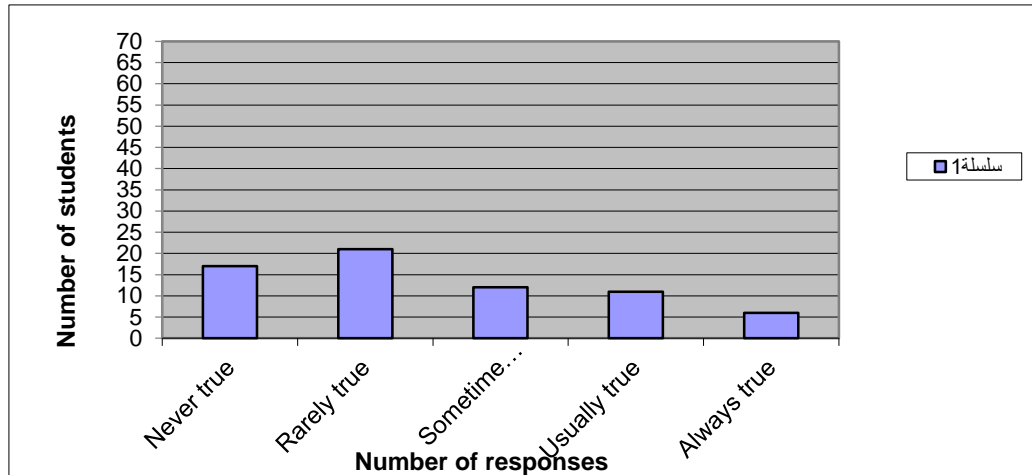
The above graph shows whether students think learning new terms should be presented in a specific context. (28.4%) of the students who selected “never true”, (46.3%) selected “rarely true”, (10.4%) selected “sometimes true”, (4.5%) selected “usually true” and (10.4%) selected “always true”.

Graph 2. I learn terms from examples provided by the teacher



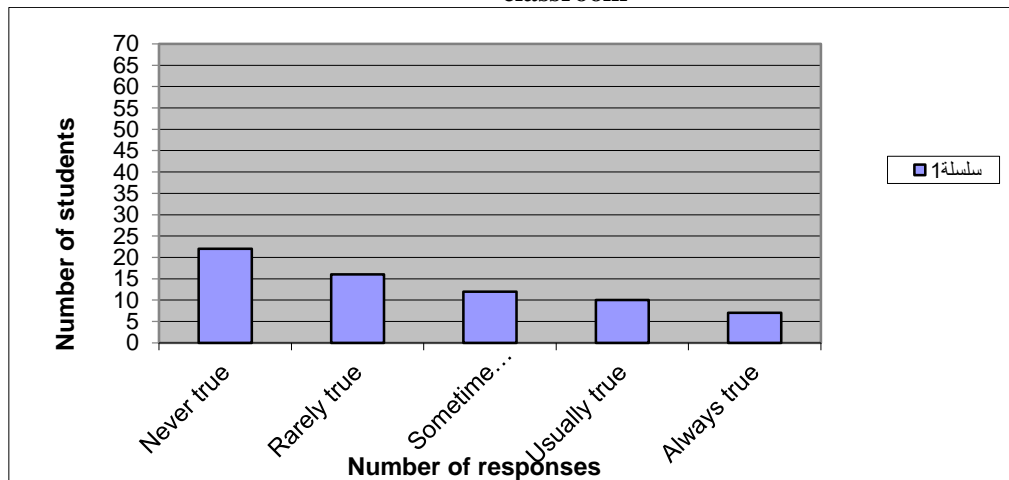
The above graph shows whether students learning terms from examples provided by the teacher (26.9%) of the students selected “never true”, (40.3%) selected “rarely true”, (17.9%) selected “sometimes true”, (10.4%) selected “usually true” and (4.5%) selected “always true”.

Graph 3. Learners must become familiar with English terminologies



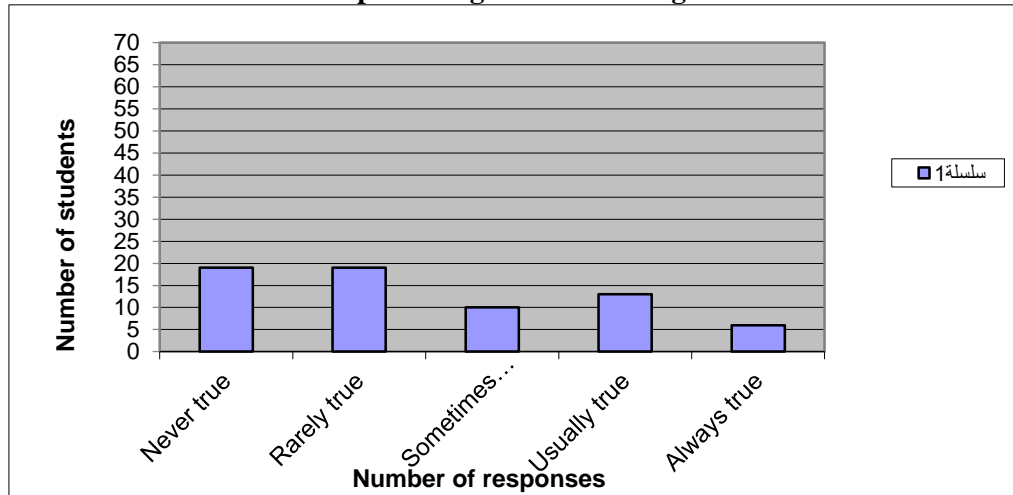
The above graph shows whether students think, It is vital that learners become familiar with English terminologies. (25.4%) of the students who selected “never true”, (31.3%) selected “rarely true”, (17.9%) selected “sometimes true”, (16.4%) selected “usually true” and (9.0%) selected “always true”.

Graph 4. It is important for students to be given the meaning of each term in the classroom



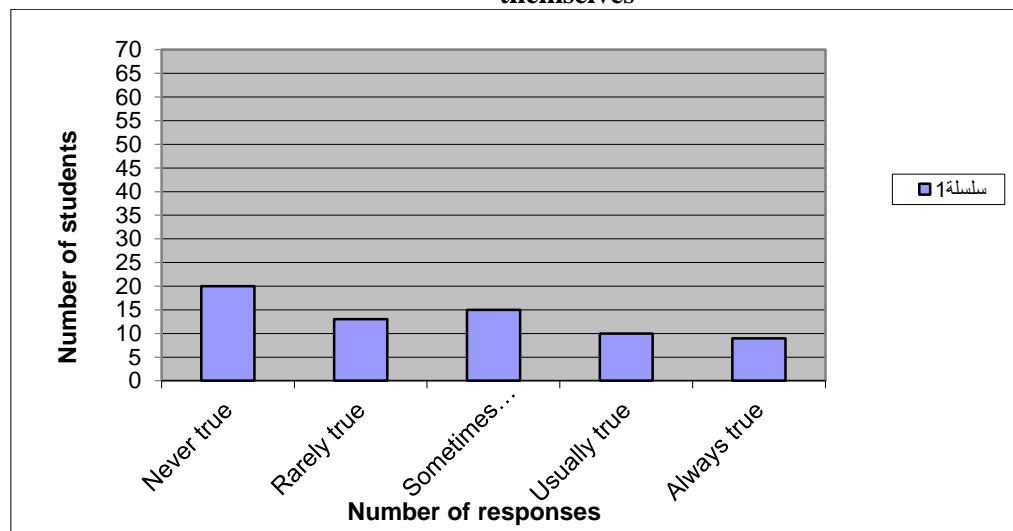
The above graph shows whether students think, It is important for students to be given the meaning of each term in the classroom (32.8%) of the students selected “never true”, (23.9%) selected “rarely true”, (17.9 %) selected “sometimes true”, (14.9 %) selected “usually true” and (10.4 %) selected “always true”.

Graph 5. The major part of the English language course should focus on teaching and practicing new terminologies



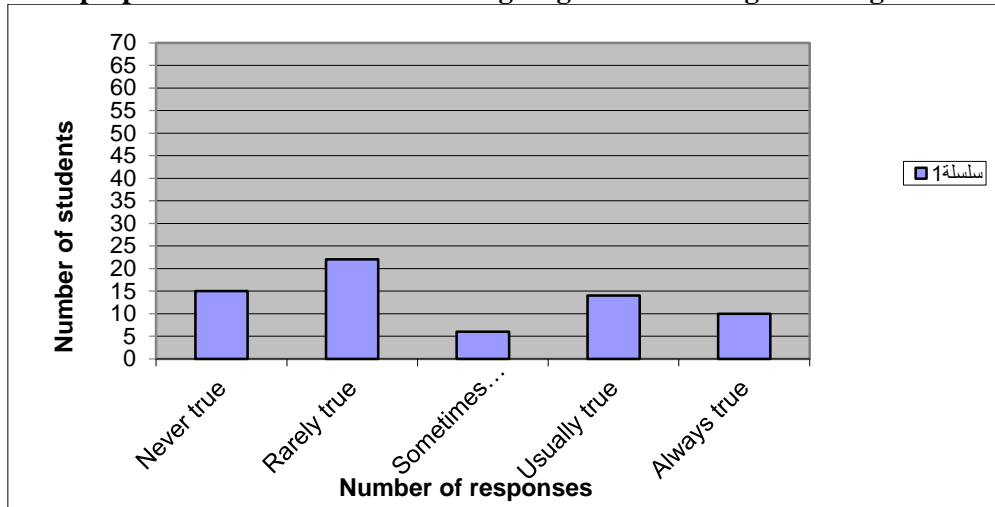
The above graph shows whether students believe, they should focus on teaching and practicing new terminologies. (28.4%) of the students who selected “never true”, (28.4%) selected “rarely true”, (14.9%) selected “sometimes true”, (19.4%) selected “usually true” and (9%) selected “always true”.

Graph 6. Learning terms is more effective when learners work out the terminologies for themselves



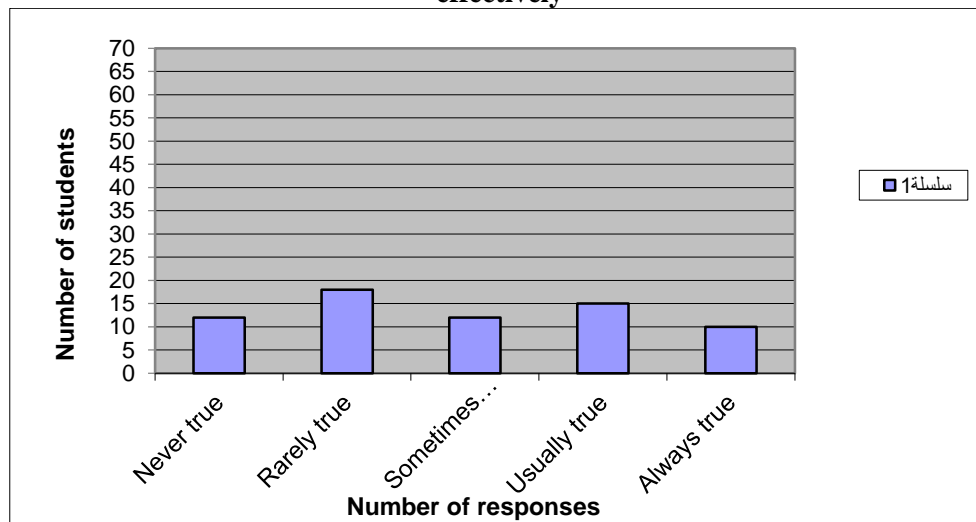
The above graph shows whether students think Learning terms is more effective when learners work out the terminologies for themselves. (29.9%) of the students selected “never true”, (22.4%) selected “rarely true”, (19.4 %) selected “sometimes true”, (14.9%) selected “usually true” and (13.4%) selected “always true”.

Graph 7. I prepare a list of terms for learning English terminologies during class



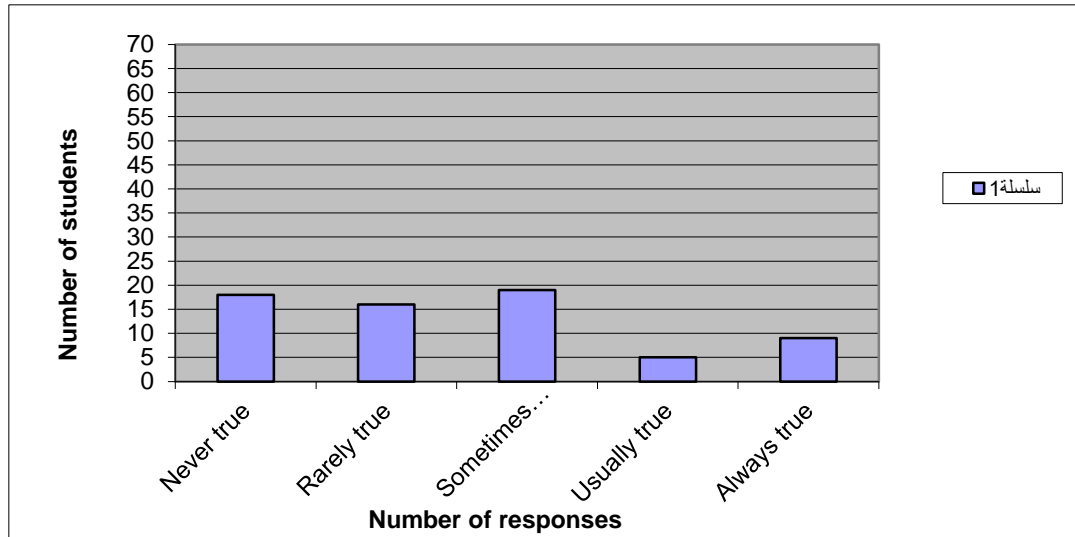
The above graph shows whether students think preparing a list of terms for learning English terminologies during the class. (22.4%) of the students selected “never true”, (32.8%) selected “rarely true”, (9%) selected “sometimes true”, (20.9%) selected “usually true” and (14.9%) selected “always true”.

Graph 8. Learners need knowledge of terminologies to be able to practice English effectively



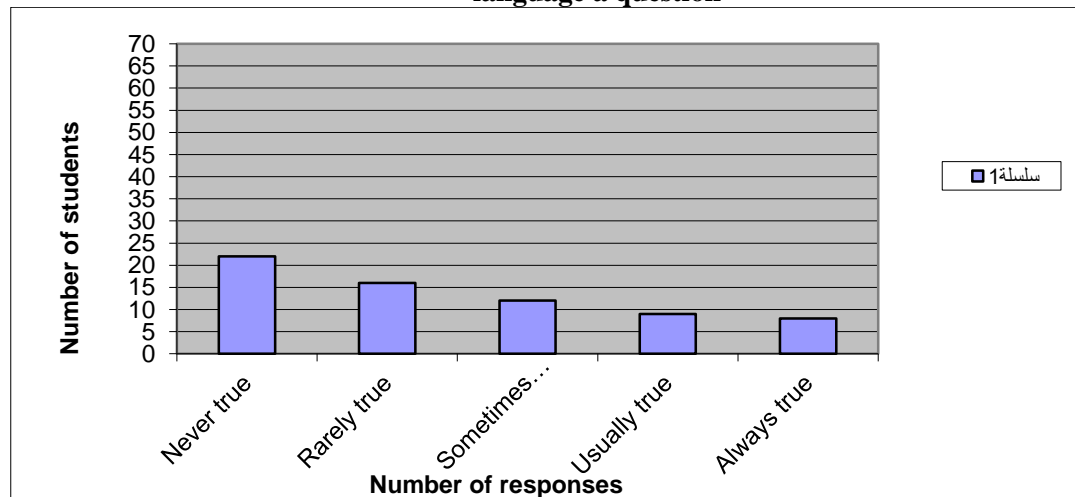
The above graph shows whether students think Learners need knowledge of terminologies to be able to practice English effectively. (17.9%) of the students who selected “never true”, (26.9%) selected “rarely true”, (17.9%) selected “sometimes true”, (22.4%) selected “usually true” and (14.9%) selected “always true”.

Graph 9. To learn terminologies I depend on what I already know about acquiring new terms



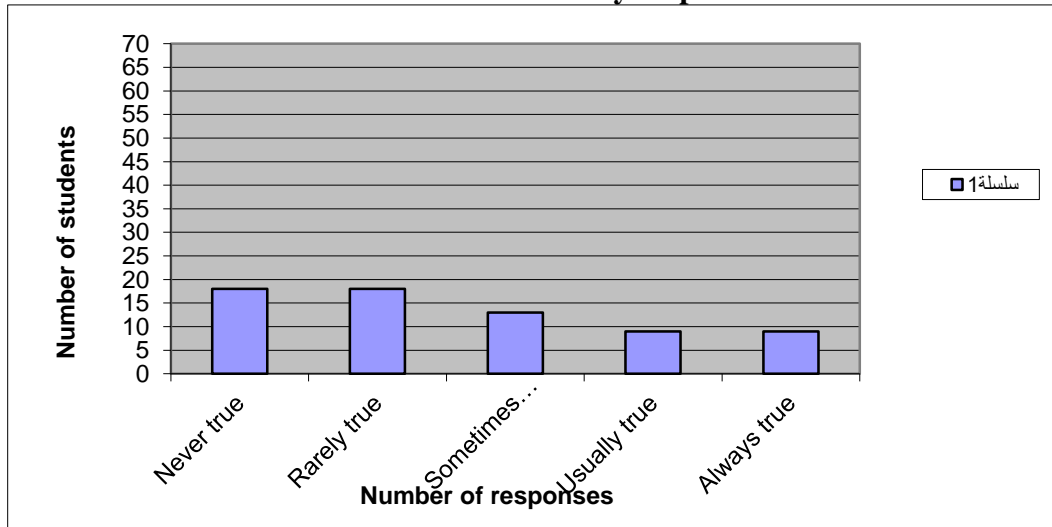
The above graph shows whether students think to learn terminologies student depends on what they already know about acquiring new terms. (26.9%) of the students who selected “never true”, (23.9%) selected “rarely true”, (28.4%) selected “sometimes true”, (7.5%) selected “usually true” and (13.4%) selected “always true”.

Graph 10. I guess learning new terminologies is the most important role of the English language a question



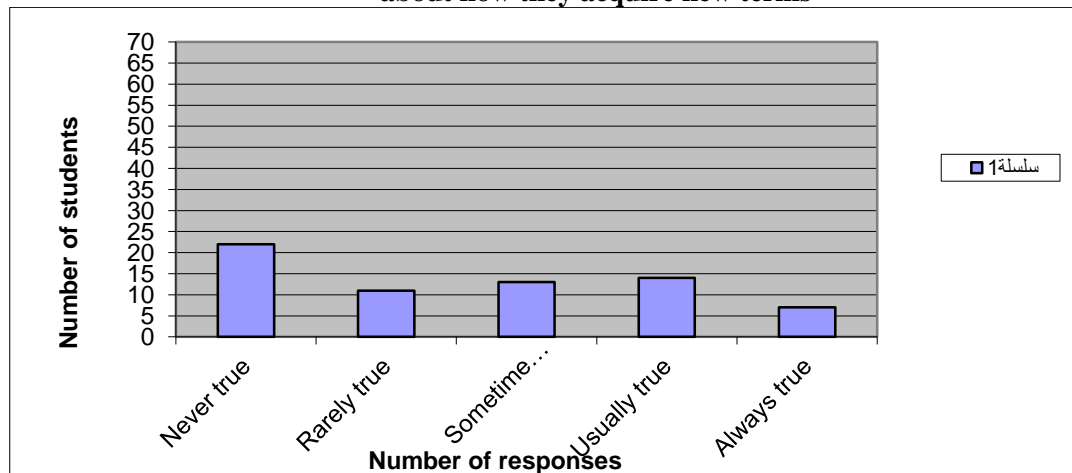
The above graph shows whether students think learning new terminologies is the most important role of the English language a question. (32.8%) of the students who selected “never true”, (23.9%) selected “rarely true”, (17.9%) selected “sometimes true”, (13.4%) selected “usually true” and (11.9%) selected “always true”.

Graph 11. I ask my colleagues about the techniques that they use in learning new terms that may help me



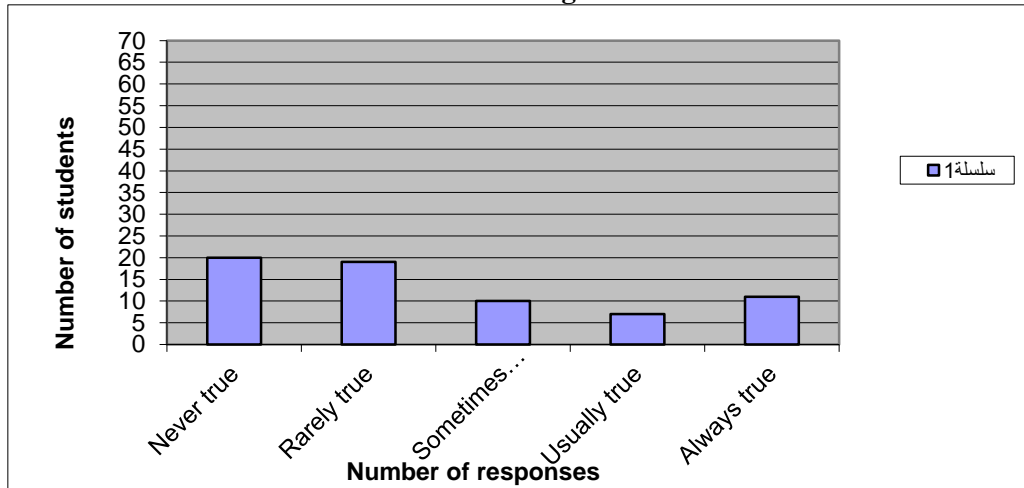
The above graph shows whether students believe asking their colleagues about the techniques they use in learning new terms that may help them. (26.9%) of the students who selected “never true”, (26.9%) selected “rarely true”, (19.4%) selected “sometimes true”, (13.4%) selected “usually true” and (13.4%) selected “always true”.

Graph 12. Teachers need to provide many opportunities to improve learners’ knowledge about how they acquire new terms



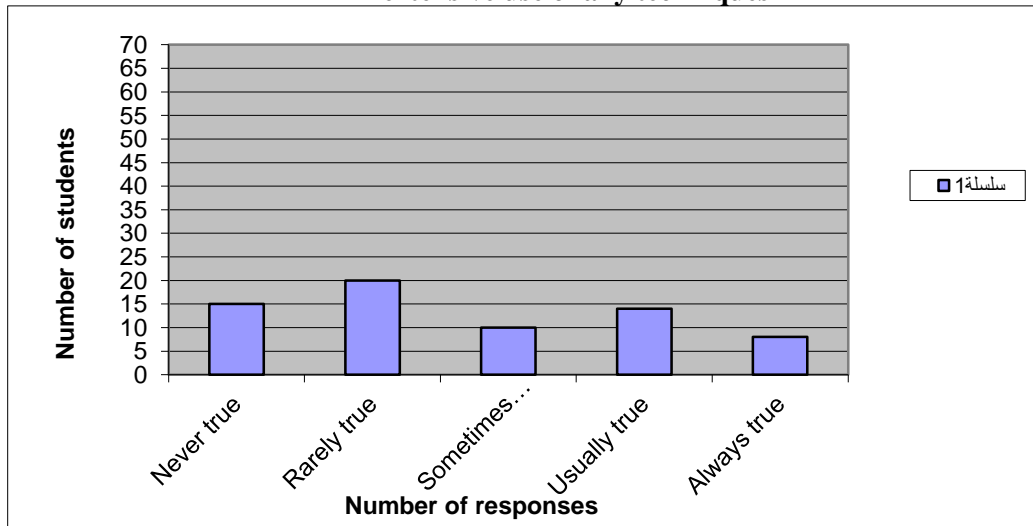
The above graph shows whether students believe it is important for teachers to provide many opportunities to improve learners’ knowledge about how they acquire new terms. (32.8%) of the students who selected “never true”, (16.4%) selected “rarely true”, (19.4%) selected “sometimes true”, (20.9%) selected “usually true” and (10.4%) selected “always true”.

Graph 13. Language courses should focus on teaching and practicing English terminologies



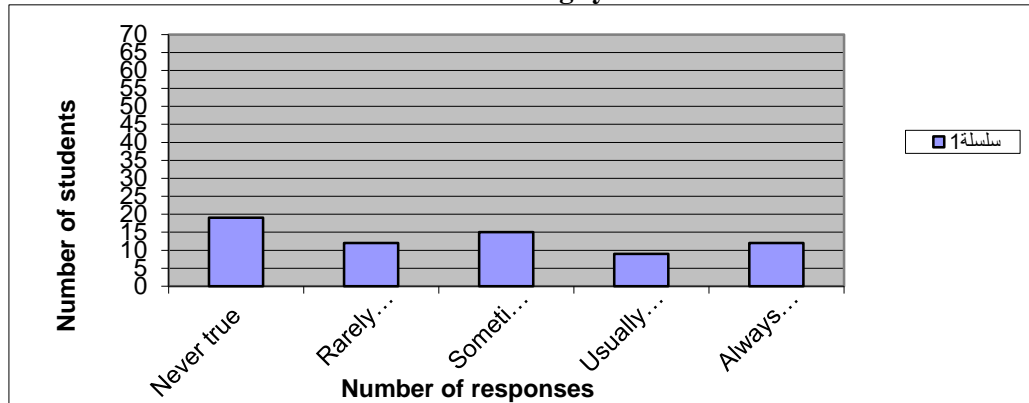
The above graph shows whether students think Language course should focus on teaching and practicing English terminologies. (29.9%) of the students selected “never true”, (28.4%) selected “rarely true”, (14.9%) selected “sometimes true”, (10.4%) selected “usually true” and (16.4%) selected “always true”.

Graph 14. I think learning new terminologies can be successfully acquired without extensive use of any techniques



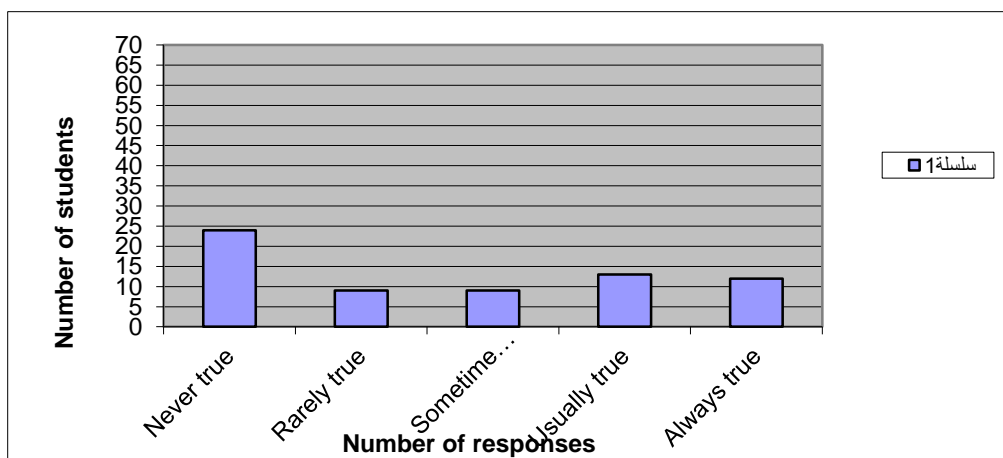
The above graph shows whether students think learning new terminologies can be successfully acquired without extensive use of any techniques. (22.4%) of the students who selected “never true”, (29.9%) selected “rarely true”, (14.9%) selected “sometimes true”, (20.9%) selected “usually true” and (11.9%) selected “always true”.

Graph 15. Teaching terminologies should be the main component of the English language teaching syllabus



The above graph shows whether students' Teaching terminologies should be the main component of the English language teaching syllabus. (28.4%) of the students who selected “never true”, (17.9%) selected “rarely true”, (22.4%) selected “sometimes true”, (13.4%) selected “usually true” and (17.9%) selected “always true”.

Graph 16. English terms should be taught to all leaves of learners



The above graph shows whether students think English terms should be taught to all learners (i.e. beginners, intermediate, and advanced). (35.8%) of the students who selected “never true”, (13.4%) selected “rarely true”, (13.4%) selected “sometimes true”, (19.7%) selected “usually true” and (17.9%) selected “always true”.

7. Discussion

The findings which emerged from the analysis are interpreted and discussed. The focus of interpretation is to relate the findings to the original research question and the existing literature review. Only the interesting findings were discussed in this study. These discussions lead to the implications and conclusions of the current study. The data show that most



students do not believe learning new terms should be presented in a specific context. This was confirmed when they selected “*rarely true*” more than other choices. This means those students do not know the value of learning English terms. This is not in line with Lin (2014) who states that through an environmental factor, children can explore another language in their developmental period.

The data shows that most students chose “*never true*”, in terms of learning terms from examples provided by their teachers. Moreover, it also revealed that most of the students chose ‘*Never true*’ related to giving students the meaning of each term during the lesson and providing opportunities to improve their knowledge of how to learn new terminology, as well as teaching terminology to all levels (i.e. beginners, intermediate and advanced). This means students may find difficult terms that cause misunderstanding of the purpose of any task This is against Gablasova (2015) who argues that it is important to learn terminology in preparatory and secondary school because they need it in the next education (university level). Therefore terminology should be taught to all leaves of Education.

The findings revealed that most students selected ‘*rarely true*’ and ‘*never true*’ when they were asked to say their beliefs about whether they should focus on teaching and practicing new terminologies. This indicates that the students have lack of practical knowledge. This finding is against Mežek et al., (2015) who found that both medium-combined teaching in an L2 and added exposure to subject-specific contents in the first language contributed to the acquisition of new terminology. Learners need knowledge of terminologies to be able to practice English effectively. Therefore, students should be aware that practicing new terms is important to improve their language proficiency.

Furthermore, it is strange to find only a few students who think learning new terminologies is the most important role of the English language a question. This indicates that most of students do not have sufficient knowledge about the value of learning English terminology. This conclusion falls in disagreement with Nation and Kyongho (1995) who argue technical vocabulary is defined as a vocabulary that occurs with very high or reasonable occurrence within a limited range of texts or just within one text. Therefore, learning English terms should be considered.

Moreover, with a percentage of 13.4%, the participants reported ‘*always true*’ whether students believe asking their colleagues about the techniques they use in learning new terms

may help them. This result indicates that the majority of students were not aware of the importance of learning English terminology. This finding is not in line with Kitao (1996) who argues English terminology has been one of the most significant elements in learning English at some undergraduate level. Therefore, teachers should explain to their students the importance of English terminology to use when they communicate with each other.

The research findings also showed that 10.4% of the participants reported '*always true*' in terms of whether students believe it is important for teachers to provide many opportunities to improve learners' knowledge about how they acquire new terms. It can be concluded that more than half of these students did not know about their teachers' roles. Teaching and learning English terms seem to be essential to help students become proficient in vocabulary, which in turn, helps them to create sentences and communicate intensively with others (Nichols and Rupley, 2004). Therefore, students should understand the value of teaching English terminology.

The last interesting finding is that indicated 28.4% of participants reported teaching terminologies should be the main component of the English language teaching syllabus '*never true*'. This result gives an undesirable indication about the teachers' use of English terms in their classes, however, Gablasova (2015) argues that it is important to learn terminology in preparatory and secondary school because they need them in the next education (university level). Thus, this issue should be considered by syllabus designer in the Education system in Libyan context.

8. Conclusion

To sum up, based upon these findings, it may be concluded that Libyan students who are studying in secondary school do not have enough knowledge about learning English terms. They are not aware of the importance of acquiring and learning English terms. A small research project such as this can not cover every aspect and hope to come up with perfect conclusions. Thus, students should be aware of terminologies in early studying stages. This would help them in vocational schools, undergraduate and postgraduate levels to be recognized of the terms that they studying. It is recommended that more research be carried out on this subject, in a larger and deeper investigation by which a more accurate picture might be obtained. It is hoped that this research can encourage teachers to consider a better way in teaching English terminology to improve the students; ability in vocabulary mastery.



References

- Alcina, A. (ed.) (2011). *Teaching and Learning Terminology: New Strategies and Methods*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Allwright, D and Bailey, K M (1994). *Focus on the Language Classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Basturkmen, H. (2006). *Ideas and Options in English for Specific Purposes*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Cabr , M. T. (1999). *Terminology: Theory, Methods, and Applications* (Vol. 1). Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing.
- Cervetti, G., Hiebert, E., Pearson, P., & McClung, N. (2015). "Factors that influence the difficulty of science words", in *Journal of Literacy Research*, 47, 2: 153-185.
- Chung, T. M. & Nation, P. (2004). Identifying technical vocabulary. *Elsevier Journal*, 251-263. School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies. Victoria University, PO Box 600. Wellington, New Zealand.
- D rnyei, Z., & Csiz r, K. (2005). The effects of intercultural contact and tourism on language attitudes and language learning motivation. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 24(4), 327-357.
- Dornyei, Z. (2003). *Questionnaires in Second Language Research: Constructing, Administration, and Processing*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Dornyei, Z. & Taguchi, T. (2010). *Questionnaires in second language research: construction, administration, and processing*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge.
- Evans, S., & Green, C. (2007). "Why EAP is necessary: A survey of Hong Kong tertiary students", in *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 6: 3-17.
- Evans, S. & Morrison, B. (2011). "The first term at university: Implications for EAP", in *ELT Journal*, 65, 4: 387-397.
- Fern ndez, T., de la Colina, M. A. F., and Peters, P. (2009). "Terminology and terminography for architecture and building construction", in *Terminology*, 15, 1: 10-36.
- Gablasova, D. (2015). "Learning technical words through L1 and L2: Completeness and accuracy of word meanings", in *English for Specific Purposes*, 39: 62-74.

- Hsu, W. (2013). "Bridging the vocabulary gap for EFL medical undergraduates: The establishment of a medical word list", in *Language Teaching Research*, 17, 4: 454-484.
- Hyland, K., & Tse, P. (2007). "Is there an "academic vocabulary?"", in *TESOL Quarterly*, 41, 2: 235-53.
- Hyland, K., & Tse, P. (2009). "Academic lexis and disciplinary practice: Corpus evidence for specificity", in *International Journal of English Studies*, 9, 2: 111-129.
- Kitao, S. K. (1996). Communicative competence, preference organization, and refusals in -British English. *Sougou Bunka Kenkyujo Kiyou*, 13, 47-58.
- Lin (2014) Lin, P. (2014). Investigating the Validity of Internet Television as a Resource for Acquiring L2 Formulaic Sequences. *System*, 42, 164-176.
- Mežek et al., (2015) roles for English textbooks where lectures are in foreign languages. EAP in a rapidly changing landscape: issues, challenges and solutions. University of Leicester
- Mežek, S., Pecorari, D., Shaw, P., Irvine, A., & Malmström, H. (2015). "Learning subject-specific L2 terminology: The effect of medium and order of exposure", in *English for Specific Purposes*, 38: 57-69.
- Nation, P. & Kyongho, H. (1995). Where would general service vocabulary stop and special purposes vocabulary begin? *Elsevier Science Ltd. 23, 1,35-1*. Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand.
- Neuman, S. B., & Dwyer, J. (2009). Missing in Action: Vocabulary Instruction in Pre-k. *The Reading Teacher*, 62, 384-392.
- Picht, H., & Acuña-Partal, C. (1997). "Aspects of terminology training", in S. Wright and G. Budin (eds.), *Handbook of Terminology Management: Basic Aspects of Terminology Management*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 305-321.
- Schnell, B., & Rodríguez, N. (2010). "Aproximación a la enseñanza de la terminología: Una propuesta metodológica adaptada a las necesidades formativas de los traductores", in *Íkala: Revista de Lenguaje y Cultura*, 15, 3: 181-203.
- Singleton, D. and L. Ryan. (2004). *Language Acquisition: the age factor*. UK: Multilingual Matters.



- Stefánsson, E. G. (2013). Second language acquisition: The effect of age and motivation.
- Ur, P. (1991) *A course in Language Teaching, Practice and theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- VOLIN, B. M., and D. N. USHAKOV (eds). (1940). *Tolkovyj slovarj russkogo jazyka [Explanatory dictionary of Russian language]. Vol. IV*. Moskva: Gos. izd-vo inostrannykh i nacionaljnykh slovarej. 1501 p.
- VOZNJUK, Gh. L., S. Z. BULYK-VERKHOLA, M. V. GHNATJUK et al. (2010). *Terminologhichna leksyka v systemi profesijnogho movlennja: metodychni vkazivky ta zavdannja dlja samostijnoji roboty studentiv [Terminological vocabulary in the system of professional speech: methodical instruction for independent work of students]*. Ljviv: Vyd-vo Nac. un-tu "Ljvivsjka politekhnika". 92 p.
- Ward, J. (2009). "A basic engineering English word list for less proficient foundation engineering undergraduates", in *English for Specific Purposes*, 28, 3: 170-182.
- Zhang, Y. (2011). *The Use of Vocabulary Learning Strategies by Good and Poor Language Learners: A case study of Chinese non-English major sophmores*.