



Discourse-based teaching of EFL vocabulary for Yemeni undergraduate students: Teachers' perceptions

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Abstract: This study aims at investigating teachers' perceptions about the use of discourse-oriented approach in teaching EFL vocabulary at two Yemeni universities. It examines teachers' perceptions about the efficiency of using discourse-based teaching of EFL vocabulary. It also surveys the challenges of implementing this approach as perceived by Yemeni EFL teachers at the tertiary level. A teachers' questionnaire of a structured format was designed to collect data on both efficiency and challenges of implementing such an approach. It was distributed among forty ($n=40$) EFL teachers of English in the two Yemeni universities, following the convenience sampling procedure. A quantitative approach was adopted for analyzing the data where mean scores and standard deviations were calculated by using SPSS software (version 20). The results revealed that teachers hold positive perceptions towards the efficiency of discourse-based teaching of EFL vocabulary to a great extent with a high mean score ($M = 2.64$). It was also perceived that the implementation of such an approach is surrounded by challenges that are related to the teachers, the students, the materials and the teaching setting. It was perceived that discourse-based instruction of EFL vocabulary at the tertiary level in the Yemeni context is challenging to a great extent with a high mean score ($M = 2.45$). Based on the results, recommendations related to using such an approach along with the requirements to cope with the challenges were provided.

Keywords: Discourse analysis, discourse-based teaching, EFL vocabulary instruction, perceptions, efficiency, challenges, context

1. Introduction

Discourse analysis is a transdisciplinary practice. Being so, its applications can be found across other different disciplines. One of the disciplines in which the applicability of discourse analysis can be gauged is the field of language pedagogy. English language teaching is one of the areas where discourse analysis plays a vitally important role. Such a role can be reflected in the teaching of English vocabulary as a basic language aspect. This aspect is regarded a critical issue which can be addressed through the use of discourse analysis as an approach witnessing a rapid development where it is challenging to summarize its work as a whole (Gardner, 1984). Furthermore, its applications in educational practices can be described as unlimited. As Connor (1990) notes, “the exact domain of discourse analysis in education is difficult to define” (p. 164). Consequently, its domain in education is prolific. It means that much work of discourse analysis is processed in educational practices. In the track of ELT, discourse analysis has become a very influential approach. It helps tremendously in facilitating and fostering English language teaching and learning in different aspects including vocabulary. Accordingly, theoretical underpinnings of discourse analysis should be transferred into practice with reference to vocabulary teaching and learning. In the current study, discourse-based teaching of vocabulary is conceptually conceived as teaching vocabulary items

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meaningfully in a context, either in its linguistic sense (co-text) or in its broad sense (situational or cultural contexts) rather than teaching them as isolated items in mechanical and memorizing drills. In such a way, vocabulary is taught through the use of discourse features such as cohesion, coherence, genres, register, semantic relations ...etc.

One of the research areas in the field of teaching vocabulary is oriented towards students' exposure to extensive reading. Students are exposed to reading texts that are authentic and contextualized with related lexical items (Chacón-Beltrán et al., 2010). In the modern era, authentic materials are more accessible than ever before. This accessibility is realized due to the technological development witnessed in today's world. As such, information and communication technologies (ICTs) have contributed significantly to unlimited accessibility to authentic materials of the target culture. Thus, authenticity of texts and interactions in language learning and teaching have been brought to the forefront (Mishan, 2005). When exposing students to such authentic materials, their communicative competencies are developed. However, the development of such competencies is not easily achieved in countries where EFL teaching depends heavily on using traditional methods (Nasser, Bin-Hady & Ahmed, 2020). Discourse orientation in the teaching of EFL vocabulary seems to be one of the approaches that promote students' communicative competence. It is particularly expected to optimize the components of lexical competence and discourse competence. However, a recent systematic review conducted by Zeng et al. (2025) revealed that instructional practices of ESL/EFL vocabulary were predominantly guided by psycholinguistic theories. Social constructivist and sociocultural theories have been rated in the second rank of research interest in the review. Discourse-based instructional practices emanate from social constructivist and sociocultural theories. This means that research orientations towards discourse-based teaching of EFL vocabulary and its efficiency in developing students' lexical competence appear to be paid less attention. In the Yemeni context, discourse-based instruction of EFL vocabulary seems to be underexplored. This study aims at investigating Yemeni teachers' perceptions about the use of discourse-oriented approach in teaching EFL vocabulary at University of Aden and University of Abyan.

1.1. Objectives of the Study

The study aims to address the following research objectives:

1. Measuring the extent to which discourse-oriented approach of teaching EFL vocabulary is efficient based on perceptions of teachers at the two Yemeni universities under investigation.
2. Investigating the extent to which discourse-oriented approach of teaching EFL vocabulary is challenging based on perceptions of teachers at the two Yemeni universities under investigation.

1.2 Questions of the Study

The study aims to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent discourse-oriented approach of teaching EFL vocabulary is efficient based on perceptions of teachers at the two Yemeni universities under investigation?
2. To what extent discourse-oriented approach of teaching EFL vocabulary is challenging based on perceptions of teachers at the two Yemeni universities under investigation?

2. Literature Review

Vocabulary is a very important aspect that requires the due attention in classroom instruction. It is a basic element of language (Willis and Ohashi, 2012) and an influential factor that affects learner's proficiency (Zhi-liang, 2010; Siyanova-Chanturia & Webb, 2016). Thus, the teaching and learning of vocabulary is an essential component in the field of foreign language instruction (Carter, 2001; Milton and Alexiou, 2012). Research on vocabulary teaching and learning has explored that vocabulary problems usually lead to problems in communication which breaks down when using the wrong words (Allen, 1983). So, teachers need to duly help learners learn vocabulary for the actual use to meet the needs and purposes in the real world. They are expected to adopt the suitable practices of vocabulary instruction. Among these practices is the adoption of discourse analysis as an orientation to be used for achieving the intended purpose. In this regard, vocabulary is studied in discourse by focusing on text patterns textured by lexical relations (McCarthy, 1991) at the discourse level. In this section, some insights are introduced to reflect how discourse-based approach is usefully employed for teaching EFL vocabulary.

Using discourse-based orientation in EFL vocabulary instruction is potentially purposeful in terms of providing meaningful activities rather than methodologies of memorizing lexical items in mechanical traditions. Bobkina and Dalmau (2010) conducted a study on teaching vocabulary through discourse-oriented syllabus. They integrated discourse-oriented activities to the teaching of vocabulary. They mainly focused on using exercises related to lexical cohesion as a discourse element in the instructional practices of EFL vocabulary for intermediate-level students in the Spanish context. The study showed that teaching EFL vocabulary through discourse-oriented approach can provide students with chances of practicing meaningful use of vocabulary and improving their abilities of text-creating and decoding vocabulary in different contexts.

Discourse-based instruction is essentially helpful for teaching vocabulary because of its contextualizing potentiality of lexical items. This contextualization is basically seen as leading steps towards students' better vocabulary development (Altalhab, 2014). Learners need to be exposed to a vocabulary item many times in different contexts to promote and scaffold their ability to use it naturally in spoken and written discourses (Choudhury, 2010). When using vocabulary items in different contexts, students' knowledge about that item is expanded and improved (Schmitt, 2000). For this to occur, teachers play an important role to help learners utilize vocabulary learning strategies where one of these strategies is guessing meaning from context (Nation, 2013; Webb & Nation, 2013). In a similar way, Behlol and Kaini (2011) found out that contextualizing vocabulary is more efficient for those students who have high performance as a result of using words in different contexts. In this way, vocabulary is not taught as discrete items out of context. Instead, it is presented in contextualized tasks and activities.

Discourse-based instruction in EFL contexts has offered several affordances to learners. Alzaghir et al. (2025) investigated the effectiveness of discourse analysis-based instruction on reading comprehension and vocabulary development of Iraqi EFL students. Using a mixed method design within a quasi-experimental methodology, the study was conducted among students at Baghdad's British Council. The study used placement test, tests of reading and vocabulary, and semi-structured interviews. The findings revealed that using discourse analysis-based instruction improved students' comprehension and vocabulary development. The qualitative analysis also indicated that the students' motivation to reading increased and their critical thinking skills were enhanced. Similarly, Al-Jarf's (2026) recent self-review of studies on EFL vocabulary showed that vocabulary development is based on several componential factors. Contextual component is one of such factors.

Likewise, Mustaghfir (2026) conducted a systematic review of research on EFL vocabulary instruction. One of the themes of the review was related to contextualized instruction. The findings revealed that contextualized instruction of EFL vocabulary is more effective than the decontextualized approaches. Thus, it is implied that contextualization of vocabulary serves as one of the potential determinants of vocabulary development.

With respect to textual context, lexical items can be manipulated in linguistic co-textual relations. For instance, collocational relations can be constructed to achieve lexical cohesion which is regarded as a type of cohesion realized through "the relations of meaning that exist within the text" (Halliday and Hasan, 1976, p. 4). It is realized, as McCarthy (1990) states, when "vocabulary items re-occur in different forms across boundaries" (p. 13) in speech and writing. Text cohesion is achieved through establishing co-textual relations for making a text a linguistic unit (Widdowson, 2004). Thus, co-textual relations should be catered for when manipulating the lexical items in the text. As such, the importance of cohesive devices needs to be highlighted. Students' awareness should also be raised towards cohesion establishment (Nasser, 2020). Adopting micro-analysis of discourse in the teaching of reading, Leng's (2024) study highlighted the importance of focusing on the logical relationship between words and sentences utilizing activities of exploring devices of lexical cohesion such as substitution, ellipsis and reference. The study also emphasized the significance of exploring semantic relations of synonymy and antonymy in teaching reading to help students learn in a systematic way to promote their linguistic sensitivity. As Al-Jarf (2026) noted, effective teaching of EFL vocabulary consistently focuses on lexical associations. She stated that contextual learning is one of the pedagogical practices of EFL vocabulary development. Activities of figuring out the meaning of unknown vocabulary in a text can be accessible through perceiving contextual relations in the given text. This is usually and effectively workable when unknown words in a text are low in number, where learners can guess the meaning of the unknown words from the contextual clues of the other lexical items in the text (Llach & Alonso, 2020).

In situational contexts such as English for specific purposes (ESP), discourse-oriented teaching of vocabulary tends to be workable. In such ESP contexts, students need to learn specific lexical items in specific domains. In these specific domains, they need specific terminology. In this trend, register as a specific vocabulary in a specific field has been singled out as an important aspect that falls under the concerns of discourse analysis. This orientation is based on that meanings of words differ from situation to another. Students need to know such differences in order that they can understand and use lexical items according to the targeted situation. For example, the word "download" is used in a technical situation. In this respect, situational English should be given attention as a trend in the field of English language pedagogy where ESP is emphasized. In this way, language is learned through what is known as content-based instruction which "may provide many opportunities for vocabulary learning" (Nation and Webb, 2011, p.643). Authenticity of the content used in the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language is vitally important. Thus, awareness needs to be raised towards using authentic materials. In a study on the Yemeni context, Abdullah and Mohdar (2025) showed that university teachers are aware of the importance of authentic materials whereas their students have limited awareness. Moreover, teachers need to raise learners' awareness towards registers through showing the different uses of such lexical items in different situations. In this regard, the use of concordances for teaching and learning vocabulary seems to be effectively helpful. This is because such concordances provide lists of words which "are used in a particular text or in the works of a particular author, together with a list of the contexts in which each word occurs" (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p.113). In addition, task-based language teaching seems to be grounded on situational contextualization. It is oriented towards the use of discourse-based practices focusing

on interaction as a component of situational context in classroom discourse. In ESL/EFL vocabulary instruction, such task-based practices can be used to sharpen students' abilities of language use. Previous research has shown how effective task-based approach is in learning ESL/EFL vocabulary (Hamama & Brigui, 2026; Sarani & Sahebi, 2012; Srilakshmi & Kiranmai, 2017). It was indicated that task-based language instruction was effective for vocabulary retention and acquisition based on a systematic review of existing research (Hamama & Brigui, 2026). It was also proved that task-based language instruction is effective for learning technical vocabulary (Sarani & Sahebi, 2012; Srilakshmi & Kiranmai, 2017).

Cultural context is also regarded as one of the fundamental issues to be accounted for when adopting a discourse-oriented approach to teaching vocabulary. This is due to the fact that there are cases where the use of vocabulary differs from culture to another in different communities. Thus, learners' awareness needs to be raised for avoiding what is referred to as negative pragmatic transfer and for developing their intercultural competence which is a part of communicative competence. Teachers need to highlight that some lexical items are differently used from one culture to another. If such cultural differences in the use of lexical items are not highlighted, learners may negatively transfer their own cultural use of these items into the target culture where pragmatic interference or discourse interference may occur. An illustration of this case is what Wahid (2007) found in a study of the impact of L1 transfer on the discourse competence of Indian learners of English as a second language. She found that learners transferred the use of vocabulary in the context of greeting when writing letters from their L1 context into the English context and they used "Respected sir/madam" where native speakers of English usually use "Dear sir/madam". This means that the students lack awareness of the cultural context and the differences in terms of stylistic use of vocabulary across cultures. Another example is the use of the lexical item "first floor" in different cultures. Such an item has different meanings in different cultures. In American context, it means "the ground floor" whereas in other cultures such as British culture, it is used to mean the floor above the ground one. Other cases that must be cautioned is the use of what are called culture-specific words which mean words that exist in one culture without having identical equivalents in the target culture and vice versa. To this end, raising students' awareness towards such cultural differences in the use of vocabulary helps in developing their intercultural communicative competence and then avoiding pragmatic interference or failure.

Regarding the linguistic co-textual relations, raising students' awareness towards collocational lexical items is of paramount importance. Students need to learn that there are some words that are often used together. An example of this is the use of the English word "bray" with the word "donkey". So, we usually say: the donkey is braying. The word "bray" can also be used to convey figurative meaning in a metaphorical context of mocking at someone. Thus, teachers are advised to raise their students' awareness towards such words and their uses. Raising students' awareness towards the importance of collocations in teaching vocabulary is positively effective. In this regard, Rao (2018) confirmed the important role of collocations in teaching and learning vocabulary. He emphasized that attention and awareness should be raised towards collocations as they serve significantly in vocabulary acquisition. Another aspect to be mentioned here is that students' awareness should be raised towards the lexical relations that exist between vocabulary items in discourse such as relations of synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, polysemy ...etc. Bearing lexical relations in mind when teaching vocabulary means that we raise the students' awareness to contextual clues which help them learn vocabulary. Therefore, raising students' awareness towards sense relations is effective for explaining the meaning of new vocabulary to students (McCarthy et al., 2010). Through making use of word relations with others in the target language and also with

associated words in L1, students figure out the meaning of a new word in the target language (Carter, 2012). Along with this, Nation (2009, p.101) suggests ways of dealing with new vocabulary in a text. One of these ways is to guess the meaning from context. It is mainly important in the teaching of vocabulary to encourage students depend on context to figure out the meaning (McCarthy et al., 2010). As demonstrated in a study conducted by Baumann et al. (2005), providing students with specific context clues optimizes their skills of analyzing context to dismantle the meanings of the unknown vocabulary items. This means that contextual analysis which is the core of discourse analysis represents a very fundamental aid of learning unfamiliar vocabulary in texts. In his study, Altalhab (2014) stated that Saudi teachers used synonymy relations and defining new vocabulary in English and Arabic as prevailing techniques for teaching English vocabulary. He also reported that Saudi teachers and students perceived teaching vocabulary through reading as an effective strategy for vocabulary learning.

On the whole, adopting discourse analysis for teaching vocabulary is beneficial. This can be implemented by involving lexical items in the process of contextualization. Thus, lexical items are preferably taught in contexts. They are advised to be manipulated linguistically through focusing on the co-textual relations with the surrounding lexical items as in the case of collocational relations. They are also better to be introduced in situational contexts. Moreover, they are suggested to be presented with raising students' awareness towards the different cultural contexts and the different meanings they convey in different cultures. In doing so, students' awareness is raised and then their ability is promoted to comprehend and use such lexical items appropriately.

Vocabulary instruction in an EFL context is not an easy task. It is a challenging task (Siyanova-Chanturia & Webb, 2016). This means that discourse-based teaching of EFL vocabulary, focusing on context as its crux, is experienced with challenges. For instance, authenticity as a basic element of content and tasks in discourse-oriented approaches to EFL vocabulary instruction might not be effectively ensured. Bringing authentic content and tasks into EFL classroom is challenging for some reasons. In the Yemeni EFL context, Abdullah and Mohdar's (2025) study explored university teachers' perceptions of these challenges. The findings revealed that teachers' use of authentic materials in teaching English in the Yemeni EFL context is challenged with some obstacles such as students' weak level in English and lack of equipment of using such materials in classrooms.

In the literature reviewed earlier, it can be captured that previous studies focused on individualistic practices of teaching vocabulary within the orientation of discourse-based approach. Some studies focused on practices related to lexical cohesion and textual relations (Al-Jarf, 2026; Baumann et al., 2005; Bobkina & Dalmau, 2010; Altalhab, 2014; Leng, 2024; Rao, 2018). Another trend of related studies stranded on situational context (Mustaghfir, 2026) whereas cultural context was the streamline of some other studies (e.g. Wahid, 2007). Specific orientations were investigated on other discursal practices such as involving authenticity (Abdullah & Mohdar, 2025) and task-based practices (Hamama & Brigui, 2026; Sarani & Sahebi, 2012; Srilakshmi & Kiranmai, 2017). However, the current study was inspired to speculate collective practices of discourse-based instruction of EFL vocabulary. Having the perspective of efficiency as a standpoint in most of the previous studies, the current study is based on a two-fold perspective of efficiency and challenges regarding the implementation of discourse-based instruction of EFL vocabulary. To the researcher's best knowledge, discourse-based teaching of EFL vocabulary at the tertiary level in the Yemeni context seems to be unexplored. The current study investigates teachers' awareness towards efficiency and challenges of implementing this approach at the tertiary level through a survey of teachers' perceptions at University of Aden and University of Abyan.

3. Methodology of the Study

3.1 Design of the Study

The approach adopted in the methodology of this research was principally based on the descriptive design. It utilized the quantitative method of data collection and analysis. For collecting the data, a structured questionnaire was used. The statistical analysis was processed on the data by using SPSS software (version 20). It has been used for measuring the arithmetic means and the standard deviations of the teachers' perceptions on the efficiency and the challenges of implementing discourse-based instruction of EFL vocabulary at the two Yemeni universities at hand.

3.2 Sample of the Study

The study has employed non-probability sampling involving convenience technique. The sample consisted of forty (40) teachers working at two Yemeni universities, namely: University of Aden (20 teachers of English) and University of Abyan (20 teachers of English). As far as the gender of the sample is concerned, twenty-four (24) of the participants were males whereas sixteen (16) were females.

3.3 Research Instrument

Since the study is oriented to the exploration of the teachers' perceptions about the efficiency of discourse-based teaching of EFL vocabulary and the challenges of its implementation, a teachers' questionnaire was constructed. It was organized in a structured format of three parts. The first part has been devoted for the demographic variables of research. The second part was designed with a focus on the teachers' perceptions of the efficiency of adopting the approach at hand. This part was constructed around fourteen (14) items. These items were specifically constructed with a focus on discourse features such as cohesion, coherence, genres, semantic relations, register and other context-related features. On the other hand, the third part consisted of (6) items focusing on the teachers' perceptions about the challenges of implementing the approach under study. The options in the second and third parts were designed in a four-point format of Likert scale. The options in the second part were particularly graded as *efficient to a great extent* (numerically coded as 3), *efficient to some extent* (numerically coded as 2), *efficient to less extent* (numerically coded as 1) and *inefficient* (numerically coded as 0) whereas those in the third part were scaled as *challenging to a great extent* (numerically coded as 3), *challenging to some extent* (numerically coded as 2) *challenging to less extent* (numerically coded as 1) and *unchallenging* (numerically coded as 0).

For checking validity, the questionnaire was given to three referees holding Ph. D. degrees in applied linguistics and having experience in teaching English at University of Aden and University of Abyan. For checking reliability, Cronbach's Alpha was calculated as in Table 1. It was recorded as high degree of reliability (0.81).

Table 1. Reliability Statistics

| Cronbach's Alpha | N of Items |
|------------------|------------|
| 0.81 | 20 |

4. Results and Discussion

For analyzing the data, the quantitative design was used. The data were processed by using SPSS software (version 20). The mean scores and the standard deviations were calculated and tabulated as in Tables 2 and 3. For data interpretation, the scale was followed on the basis of categorizing the

mean scores into four ranges representing degrees of efficiency and challenges. Regarding efficiency, the first range (from 0 to less than 0.75) represents inefficiency and the second range (from 0.75 to less than 1.5) is interpreted as efficiency to less extent. The third range is from 1.5 to less than 2.25 which indicates efficiency to some extent and the fourth range (from 2.25 to 3) represents efficiency to a great extent. Similarly, the data related to the challenges of implementing discourse-based teaching of EFL vocabulary were categorized according to the mean scores into four categories. The first category includes the range (from 0 to less than 0.75) representing unchallenging state while the second category involves the range (from 0.75 to less than 1.5) indicates a challenge to less extent. The third category (from 1.5 to less than 2.25) represents a challenge to some extent and the fourth category (from 2.25 to 3) represents a challenge to a great extent. These categories of efficiency and challenges were considered on the basis of dividing the general range (3) into four quarters representing the extents.

Table 2. Teachers' perceptions of the efficiency of discourse-based teaching of EFL vocabulary

| | M | SD |
|---|-----|------|
| Teaching vocabulary in context | 2.7 | 0.45 |
| Raising the students' awareness to the different contexts in which words are used | 2.7 | 0.45 |
| Teaching vocabulary through word set relations | 2.6 | 0.50 |
| Encouraging the students to create contexts for using new vocabulary | 2.6 | 0.48 |
| Using authentic materials for teaching vocabulary | 2.7 | 0.44 |
| Using task-based techniques for teaching vocabulary such as role-playing | 2.6 | 0.48 |
| Teaching vocabulary through providing antonymous words in context | 2.7 | 0.47 |
| Teaching vocabulary through providing synonymous words in context | 2.6 | 0.49 |
| Raising students' awareness towards collocations used in discourse | 2.6 | 0.50 |
| Raising students' awareness towards culture-specific words used in discourse | 2.6 | 0.50 |
| Raising students' awareness towards polysemous words used in discourse. | 2.7 | 0.46 |
| Encouraging students to guess the meaning from context | 2.6 | 0.47 |
| Providing students with vocabulary used for particular discourses | 2.5 | 0.51 |
| Using paraphrasing strategy for teaching vocabulary | 2.4 | 0.50 |
| General mean score and standard deviation | 2.6 | 0.09 |

As can be seen in Table 2, teachers' perceptions about the efficiency of discourse-based teaching of EFL vocabulary were reported in fourteen perspectives. The general mean score of the teachers' perceptions was recorded as 2.64 which represents efficiency to a great extent. This means that teachers hold positive opinions about the efficiency of discourse-based teaching of EFL vocabulary. The teachers' perceptions of all the items recorded by the mean scores represented in Table 2 fall in

the fourth range from 2.25 to 3 which represents a great extent of efficiency. These scores ranged between 2.43 and 2.75. They reflect the teachers' positive perceptions towards discourse-based teaching of EFL vocabulary. This means that teachers are aware of the efficiency of discourse-oriented approach to teaching EFL vocabulary. The standard deviation values reflected a low degree of variance in the teachers' perceptions which ranged between 0.44 and 0.51. This means that there is a high degree of consistency among the teachers' perceptions.

The teachers' perceptions have reflected efficiency of the discourse-based approach at different perspectives. One of these perspectives is the teaching of vocabulary in context. Teachers perceived that it is efficient to teach vocabulary in context as represented in the mean score (2.72) and the standard deviation (0.45). This means that teachers are, to a great extent, aware of the efficiency of contextualizing vocabulary as a technique of teaching. In this respect, the results are consistent with ideas of some scholars who emphasized the role of context in teaching vocabulary (e.g. Baumann et al., 2005; Behlol & Kaini, 2011; Llach & Alonso, 2020; Mustaghfir, 2026).

Raising the students' awareness towards the diversity of contexts in which words are used is perceived to be efficient to some extent in teaching EFL vocabulary. This was numerically demonstrated in the mean score of the teachers' perceptions which was recorded as 2.72 along with the standard deviation (0.45). This, in turn, consolidates teachers' perceptions of the importance of contextualizing vocabulary as a teaching technique for enhancing and developing students' vocabulary repertoire. This goes in line with Behlol and Kaini's (2011) results in that contextual teaching of vocabulary help learners use words in different contexts which promote their oral and written performance.

Teachers' perceptions also unveiled that using word set is efficient to a great extent in teaching EFL vocabulary. This was represented in the mean score (2.60) and the standard deviation (0.50). Using word set as a technique of vocabulary teaching is an influential procedure for providing linguistic contextualization which may help students process vocabulary for better understanding, learning and using of such lexical items. In such a way, students might activate word mapping through making relations based on what is known as semantic fields. As such, teachers' perceptions in this concern match previous conceptualizations of lexical associations as a contextualized technique of vocabulary instruction (Carter, 2012). Such a perceived efficiency of word association in teaching EFL vocabulary is also compatible with Al-Jarf's (2026) findings of the systematic review emphasizing the effectiveness of lexical associations in pedagogical practices of EFL vocabulary.

Encouraging students to contextualize vocabulary was also perceived as efficient to a great extent for teaching vocabulary. The mean score of the teachers' perceptions was recorded as 2.65 along with the standard deviation (0.48). As the students are encouraged to create contexts for using vocabulary, their roles as active participants in learning vocabulary is promoted. Students are part of the context in which vocabulary is taught and learned. Thus, getting them involved in the process promotes better development of their vocabulary in interaction. Students' use of vocabulary in context would scaffold their skills of activating vocabulary instead of being passive. Such practices of students' use of vocabulary in context would enhance their productive skills of using English as a foreign language. Through using discourse-oriented approach, students are encouraged to use EFL vocabulary in linguistic context or what is called co-text. This is efficiently impactful for developing students' text-creating abilities as indicated in Bobkina and Dalmau's (2010) findings.

The data analysis showed the great efficiency of using authentic materials in EFL vocabulary instruction. This was reported in the teachers' perceptions as in the mean score (2.75) and the

standard deviation (0.44). Authentic materials are influential aids that raise students' awareness to the realistic use of vocabulary in their life discourses. In this regard, the study goes in line with Abdullah and Mohdar (2025) whose study showed Yemeni university EFL teachers' awareness towards the use of authentic materials in the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language.

Using task-based teaching techniques such as role playing was also recorded as a great efficient technique for teaching EFL vocabulary. This was represented in the mean score (2.65) and the standard deviation (0.48). This means that the teachers are aware of the role of task-based teaching in enhancing EFL vocabulary. Teachers' perceptions regarding the efficiency of task-based teaching of vocabulary match the findings of previous related studies (Hamama & Birgui, 2026; Sarani & Sahebi, 2012; Srilakshmi & Kirnamai, 2017). Thus, awareness towards such a type of instruction should be raised.

Using texts that include lexical relations such as antonymy was reported to be positively influential in teaching EFL vocabulary as represented in the mean score (2.67) and the standard deviation (0.47). Providing other lexical relations of synonymy, polysemy and collocational relations were also perceived to be efficient to a great extent in teaching EFL vocabulary as represented in the mean scores (2.62), (2.60) and (2.60) along with their standard deviations (0.49), (0.50) and (0.50) respectively. In terms of collocational relations, teachers' perceptions in the current study match Rao's (2018) emphasis on the significance of collocations for vocabulary teaching and learning. The findings related to utilizing lexical relations in processing vocabulary fall in agreement with some previous studies (e.g. Al-Jarf, 2026; Altalhab, 2014; Bobkina and Dalmau, 2010).

The analysis revealed the efficiency of raising students' awareness towards culture-specific items. This is clearly conceived in teachers' perceptions estimated by the mean score (2.70) and the standard deviation (0.46). These perceptions emphasize the role of raising awareness towards cultural contexts and the cultural differences to avoid cultural interference which may results in pragmatic failure. Teachers' perceptions in this concern parallel with that raised by Wahid (2007) regarding the impact of L1 transfer on the discourse level when communicating in the target culture.

Encouraging students to guess meaning from contexts was also one of the aspects reported in the teachers' perceptions to be efficient to a great extent in teaching EFL vocabulary. This was estimated by the mean score (2.67) and the standard deviation (0.47). Through guessing the meaning from context, students would activate their cognitive abilities through making contextual analysis of sense relations in the discourse in which a new vocabulary is used. Such a perceived procedure was similarly highlighted as a significant practice in vocabulary teaching and learning in some scholarly previous existing literature (e.g. Llach & Alonso, 2020; McCarthy et al., 2010; Nation, 2013; Webb & Nation, 2013).

Teachers also perceived that providing students with vocabulary for particular discourses is efficient to a great extent. This was represented in the mean score (2.52) and the standard deviation (0.51). This can be implemented through providing students with a variety of ESP register used in particular discourses through content-based instruction. In this trend, students may have many affordances for learning vocabulary as noted by Nation and Webb (2011).

Using the strategy of paraphrasing for teaching vocabulary was also recorded in the teachers' perceptions to be efficient to a great extent as represented by the mean score (2.43) and the standard deviation (0.50). Paraphrasing is also regarded as a strategy that is based on working on sense or lexical relations such as synonymy or other metalinguistic strategies such as making definitions. It makes use of dismantling power of vocabulary item for simplifying texts using simple conceptual equivalent to the original vocabulary. Within the work of lexical cohesion relations, paraphrasing is

grounded on textually-oriented discorsal features. Thus, teachers' perceptions in this regard go in line with those studies focusing on semantic relations (e.g. Altalhab 2014; Bobkina & Dalmau, 2010).

These discourse-oriented techniques were perceived to be efficient for teaching EFL vocabulary. They involve issues regarding the process of contextualizing lexis. This contextualization of vocabulary is represented in linguistic, situational and cultural relations. In linguistic contextualization, students are encouraged to comprehend and produce EFL vocabulary through the use of linguistic clues or what is known as co-textual relations. These relations are expressed in terms of sense of surrounding words. In the situational contextualization, students are encouraged to process vocabulary in different situations or contexts. In the cultural contextualization, the students' awareness is raised towards the cultural differences of using words in different contexts.

Though it is perceived as an influential task to employ discourse-based teaching of EFL vocabulary, teachers also reported some challenges annexed to the implementation of such an approach. These challenges are represented in Table 3.

Table 3. Teachers' perceptions of the challenges of implementing discourse-based teaching of EFL vocabulary

| | M | SD |
|--|-----|------|
| Lack of discourse-based ELT materials | 2.5 | 0.50 |
| | 5 | |
| Lack of teaching experience of discourse-based instruction of EFL vocabulary | 2.4 | 0.50 |
| | 0 | |
| The students' low proficiency level in English | 2.4 | 0.50 |
| | 5 | |
| Insufficient class time for implementing discourse-based teaching of vocabulary | 2.4 | 0.50 |
| | 5 | |
| Teachers' lack of motivation towards implementing discourse-based teaching of vocabulary | 2.4 | 0.55 |
| | 8 | |
| Students' lack of vocabulary learning strategies | 2.3 | 0.54 |
| | 7 | |
| General mean score and standard deviation | 2.4 | 0.06 |
| | 5 | |

As can be seen in Table 3, implementing discourse-based teaching of EFL vocabulary is challenging to a great extent as represented in the total mean score (2.45) with the standard deviation (0.06). All the items related to the challenging nature of this trend of teaching were reported to be challenging to a great extent (higher than 2.25). Lack of discourse-based ELT materials was recorded at the first rank as the most challenging issue represented by the highest mean score ($M = 2.55$, $SD = 0.50$) whereas students' lack of vocabulary learning strategies was assessed to be the least challenging one ($M = 2.37$, $SD = 0.54$). This implies that teachers need to adapt materials of teaching EFL vocabulary to mitigate the challenges of implementing discourse-based teaching of EFL vocabulary. This adaptation may involve using supplementary materials. In these materials, discourse-based exercises and activities are provided. For example, texts encompassing lexical cohesion such as synonymy, antonymy, polysemy and other lexical ties may be supplemented. The second rank of these challenges was teachers' lack of motivation towards implementing discourse-based teaching of vocabulary ($M = 2.48$, $SD = 0.55$). Towards harnessing discourse-based approach, teachers should be encouraged to use discourse-featured activities rather than memorizing drills. When they are encouraged to do so, they might get engaged more enthusiastically with their students.

In doing so, students might be activated to learn EFL vocabulary interactively. In the third rank, students' low proficiency of English was estimated to be challenging to a great extent as represented by the mean score ($M = 2.45$) and the standard deviation ($SD = 0.50$). Similarly, insufficient class time for implementing discourse-based teaching of vocabulary was recorded in the third rank as one of the challenges related to this trend of teaching ($M = 2.45$, $SD = 0.50$). Lack of teaching experience of discourse-based instruction of EFL vocabulary was recorded at the fourth rank ($M = 2.40$, $SD = 0.50$) while students' lack of vocabulary learning strategies was at the last rank. On the whole, discourse-based teaching of EFL vocabulary is fraught with challenges related to the teacher, the students, and the teaching materials and the teaching setting. These results fall in agreement with other previous studies regarding the challenges of implementing discourse-oriented approach to EFL vocabulary instruction such as those of Siyanova-Chanturia and Webb (2016) who stated that teaching vocabulary in an EFL context is challenging. In terms of bringing authenticity to discourse-oriented classroom, the study revealed challenges similar to those explored by Abdullah and Mohdar (2025) regarding students' weak level of proficiency in English and lack of materials and equipment. However, the current study focused on authenticity regarding EFL vocabulary instruction whereas Abdullah and Mohdar's (2025) was concerned with authenticity in English language teaching in general.

As far as the limitation of the results is concerned, the study is not concerned with the perceptions of teachers at all Yemeni universities. It is only confined to two universities based on limitations and difficulties of accessibility. Thus, sampling was based on convenience. Therefore, further research is suggested to involve larger samples of teachers' population in many Yemeni universities.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Teaching EFL vocabulary can be implemented by following different approaches where discourse-based approach is considered one of the significant ones in ELT programs. In the current study, Yemeni EFL teachers at the tertiary level at University of Aden and University of Abyan tended to hold positive perceptions towards using discourse-based approach to teaching EFL vocabulary. The results revealed that practices of this approach which are mainly centered on contextualizing vocabulary are efficient to a great extent. However, such an approach is not simply implemented. Rather, it was perceived by the teachers to be challenging. The teachers hold perceptions about the challenging nature of such an approach which can be related to teachers, students, teaching materials and teaching setting. All in all, discourse-based teaching approach to teaching EFL vocabulary was perceived to be efficient to a great extent in spite of the challenges it is fraught with when implementing it in the Yemeni university context. As perceived by the teachers, the implementation of discourse-based approach to teaching EFL vocabulary is challenging to a great extent.

Based on the results, authorities at the Yemeni universities at hand are recommended to encourage and train teachers on the use of exercises and activities of discourse-based approach when teaching EFL vocabulary. It is also recommended that policy makers and curriculum designers at the two universities need to account for the requirements and facilities to cope with the challenges of implementing discourse-based teaching of EFL vocabulary. These may include accessible resources such as authentic materials and equipment that help in practicing such an approach.

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