

## Teachers' Attitudes toward using Vocabulary Materials via Association, at Jazan University, Saudi Arabia

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**Abstract:-** Vocabulary teaching techniques become significantly important in the field of EFL research. The interest of this study has been focused on exploring teachers' perspectives regarding effective teaching strategies such as association method. The study aims to examine teachers' attitudes and their knowledge towards association method. The data were collected from 30 teachers of English language at Jazan University in Saudi Arabia. The participants are international staff members who come from nine countries. The vocabulary association teaching method questionnaire was designed to survey teachers' perceptions toward certain vocabulary techniques. Data analysis was analyzed by SPSS, including descriptive statistics. The study has shown that the word association has a positive role in teaching vocabulary. Therefore, the results of this study indicated that teachers in general prefer teaching vocabulary through word association method which is considered as interesting one for teaching EFL students. Moreover, this method enhances the students' interests, engagement, motivation and increasing their vocabulary.

**Key words:-** Vocabulary, techniques, association, perspectives, receptive, strategies.

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### 1.0. Introduction:

Teachers' perspectives generally rely upon their attitudes about teaching methods and strategies. Nazary [13](2008) asserts that teachers' attitudes have to reach to their students' aptitude and inspiration in teaching English. The accomplishment variable of learning English does not just rely on the student. Teachers' techniques in teaching English are important in developing favorable experiences for effective teaching. This research tries to explore teachers' attitudes about the use of word association in teaching vocabulary. As Vermeer [18](2001) certifies that learning vocabulary considered as the main components of language learning acquisition for along time. Hunt and Beglar [7](2005) claim that vocabulary is a guiding image for the essential understanding of language and its use. Mohammadi, Alavinia, Pouyan [11](2012) believe that word association is technically contribute in increasing vocabulary knowledge. Regarding to the significance of the word association method, Lewis [9](2014) states that, association method is an efficient, more fascinating, and greatly more fun technique for learning vocabulary. Word association is a learning method in which vocabulary is associated through using imagination to generate rich mental pictures of words that look like the words which students need to recall. It encourages students to associate new vocabulary that they want to memorize with animated images that include imaginary figures of animals or mechanical items or even associated with a short story. These images or stories make memorization easier and words will be unforgetten.

### 1.1. Statement of the Problem:

Learning vocabulary is more significant than grammar. Wilkins (1972 as cited in Mohammadi, Alavinia, Pouyan,

2012)[11] argues that "without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed". Folse [4](2004) learning vocabulary of the first language dissimilar to the process of learning a second language. Students required to do classroom exercises that motivate them retrieve the form, the meaning, or practice the word. Therefore, teachers need to use new teaching techniques such as word association in order to change old-style learning techniques such as simple note taking, rote memorization that do not efficiently involve students in the active learning.

### 1.2. Objectives of the Research:

The objectives of the research can be summarized in the following

To investigate teachers' thoughts about their use of the word association method in teaching.

To know about how the teachers feelings toward the effects of word association method on students' vocabulary knowledge.

To understand the teachers' attitudes toward using the word association method in the classrooms.

Realizing teachers' obstacles about using word association for teaching.

### 1.3. The Significance of the Study:

The word Association method has become a strategy to engage students in learning vocabulary. This paper designs to explore the attitudes of teachers towards using word association in their teaching practice. Numerous studies and reports refer to the importance of using activities to have students participate in learning words. "The more a learner engages with a new word, the more likely he/she is learning it" Schmitt[16]( 2010:26). The importance of this study is that discovering how teachers consider word association in

enhancing the students' interests, engagement, motivation and increasing their vocabulary. The study tries to investigate the teacher's thoughts about the advantages that word association method could provide for EFL students at Jazan university. In addition, the researchers expect that teachers, perhaps, have positive and good experience towards teaching vocabulary through word association.

## 2.0. Literature Review:

### 2.1. Word Association:

Word association is an old strategy of psychoanalysis which the person of the first word that comes into consciousness on a hearing word. In such way it was recalled that aspects of unconscious could be come out before defendant intervene. [22](Collins English Dictionary 2012). In the same regards, word association is considered as a connection and production of other words in response to a hearing word, done immediately as a game, creative technique, or in a psychiatric evaluation. Word association is a related method to a person's memory when he/she classifies words in similarities or contrary. This method is called natural calssifiers of the conceptual of the vocabulary of the language.

Many studies investigate the usefulness of word association. The researcher named Vasilijevic [17](2008) used a word association as a method to improve Japanese learners' vocabulary skills in English. The researcher attempts to find out the positive effects of word association, explicit definitions, and inferring word meaning from context in reading class. He found out that word association made vocabulary learning easier and increase vocabulary knowledge. Lewis [9](2014) in his book "Fluent in 3 Months" writes that a learner's ability of communication increase when a learner improves his or her vocabulary. Therefore, a second language learner has to concentrate on learning words and try to stick them in his or her long memory. Lewis suggests two tips on using word association as follows:

**First Tip:** choose a new word that you do not know up till now and find it out in a course book. Now think about a funny or silly way to associate the new word with hilarious images, characters or short story. For example: Playa is a Spanish word that means "beach". In order to create a word association for "Playa", you need the imagination. When you look at the word, you may think of a cheesy pickup artist (a 'player') walking on the beach, seek in finding beautiful Spanish girls but he gets slapped in the face. Then you can slap yourself to remember it easily.

**Second Tip:** Technology can be used in generating word associations. For instance, Memrise. com is a good source for mnemonics associated with common vocabulary in

different languages. It helps users to make up their own word associations make the memory of words growing stronger, and never fail to recall.

The main aspect of a word association is to know and memorize word meanings which is considered as a necessary factor that reading teacher needs to develop. In western context, Gipe &Arnold[5] (1979) attempted four techniques in teaching vocabulary. They are association method, category method, context method and dictionary method. The investigators found out that the context method and word association method are more supportive and effective than category and dictionary method. They stated that with word association method " a learner was able to utilize old information to aid in storage of new information" (1979: 284).

### 2.2. Using Word Association in Teaching:

Bromley (2002, 2007), Meara (2009), Richards (1976), Hopinks and Bean (1999) ([1], [2], [10], [14], [6]) recommend that students can memorize word when they create associations for new vocabulary and connect them with their existing schema. Each word has linguistic form that contains print and meaning and non-linguistic form that includes mental and sensory perceptions. In order to learn and memorize linguistic form easily, learners need to activate visual mental images of a given word and associate it with several senses. Bromley recommended some strategies teachers can use to combine between linguistic and non-linguistic form while they are teaching vocabulary:

The first strategy of teaching new vocabulary is to involve learners before teaching new words by kowing their knowledge and related experiences to introduce a chapter or a chosen topic. For instance, before the teacher asks students to read a unit about Transportation, the word car, and introduce its definition, provide the word's structures, and show a picture of someone who drives a car or a video of car race. In order to engage students in real life situations.

Secondly the teacher can use a technique that called (K-W-L) which means (know, want to know, and learned; Ogle, (1986) when an instructor explains a new word. First, he or she should list what students already know about the given word and what they'd like to know about such word. After he or she has introduced the word, he or she has to review with them what they learned about the word. (Cited in Bromley 2007)[2].

The third strategy is to have students study vocabulary by using their different abilities in individual, pairs or in groups to create three-dimensional words (Bromley, 2002)[1]. On paper (see Figure1), The teacher can introduce a word through different steps, such as using the word in a sentence, a phrase, drawing, and present a real object of the word.

After that, the teacher has to divide a class into small groups and have them to teach one another the new vocabulary and then the teacher urges the whole class to make a revision for their work. (Bromely, 2007:531)[2]

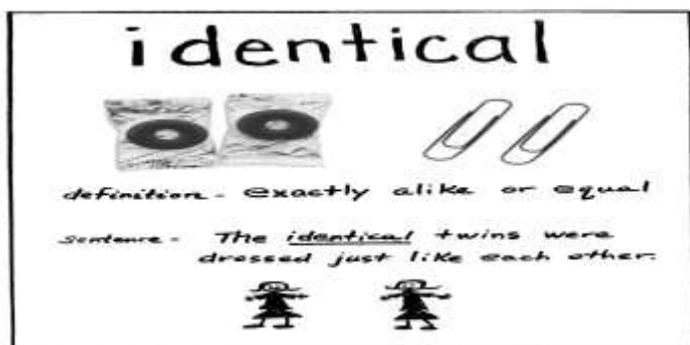


Figure (1) Shows the Identical Twins ( Adopted from Bromely 2007)

The fourth strategy is that, the teacher can create a word association test that contains a list of words which are represented once at on a specific table. Then, the teacher asks students to write down or say aloud the first word that comes to their mind for every word in the list. (Meara, 2009)[10]

Richards (1976)[14] mentions that each word has network of associations words. So, students need to understand the relationships between a given word and other vocabularies in language. For instance, he gives example from Slobin work (1971) that teachers can use in classroom and ask students to find out associative links for specific word by:

- A) Contrast or antonym (wet-dry).
- B) Similarity or synonym (blossom-flower).
- C) Subordinative classification (animal-dog).
- D) Coordinate classification (apple-peach).
- E) Superordinate classification (spinach-vegetable).

Hopkins and Bean (1999) [6] state that the verbal word association strategy can help students to learn content words and increase their vocabularies. Teachers can apply this strategy in classroom by having students divided the square into four sections. In the upper left-hand section, students write a target root or prefix and a definition below it. In the right-hand section, they write the personal association for the root along with visual association below.

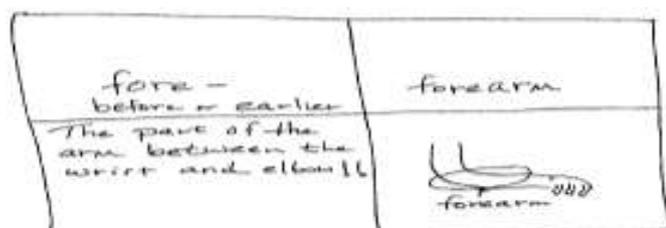


Figure (2) Shows Vocabulary Square for Prefix (fore)

### 2.3. The Word Association Knowledge Strategies:

In the same concept, Schmitt, (2000)[15] suggested that teachers need to use different word knowledge techniques to help students to know and learn receptive and productive a word meaning. When students are capable to comprehend a word while listening to a text is identified as “receptive knowledge”, however, being able to practice using a word in verbal and written form is known as a “productive knowledge”. Nation [12](1990) introduces a list of “word knowledge” that students require to master in knowing a word such as: the meaning(s) of the word, the written form of the word, the spoken form of the word, the grammatical behavior of the word, the collocations of the word, the register of the word, the associations of the word, and the frequency of the word.

Kuehn [8](2015) assumes that the word association method can help students to make a progress in learning, using, and recalling vocabulary. He taught EFL and ESL students through word association method by following the different steps that similar to Nation [12](1990) word knowledge strategies:

#### 1. The Meaning and Oral Presentation of New Words:

The teacher needs to have his students listen to new vocabularies before they even see the word. He/she pronounces the target word to the students many times and the students pay attention and repeat the word after him/her. While students are repeating the new words, the instructor certifies that they are saying the word properly. As the teacher pronounces the word, he/she displays a picture and introduces the meaning for his/her students or act out the meaning.

#### 2. Written Presentation of New Words:

When the teacher makes sure that his/her students are able to hear and pronounce the word correctly, the instructor will present its written form. He/she should write the word on the white or blackboard, and have individual or choral repetition for two or three times to check students’ pronunciation. If the meaning is not clear, the teacher has students to look up at the word in the dictionary.

#### 3. The Use of New Words with Associations:

The teacher should explain to his or her students how to they can use new words with associations. For example, he or she can introduce any word such as "nasty" to his or her students. Then, the teacher should give the students a simple definition for "Nasty" that means bad to eat or disgusting. After that, the teacher asks students to come up with any words or things that are associated with "Nasty." Students may think of nouns such as “Stink” or adjectives such as “Smelly”, “Ugly”, “Crazy”.

#### 4. Measuring the Usage of New Vocabularies with Associations

The teacher should create exercises and quizzes as well as exams in order to evaluate students' knowledge about associations. For instance, students can link new vocabulary with its matching associations. The teacher can write certain words in Italic such as *delicious*, *bitter*, *sugary*, and ask his or her students to associate new words by filling the blanks with the corresponding words.

Olives, lemon, and coffee \_\_\_\_\_

Pancake, Maple Syrup, and Honey \_\_\_\_\_

Match potato, Turkey with gravy and Fish cake \_\_\_\_\_

#### 5. Using New Words in Sentences:

After students have skills on generating associations for new words, the teacher should have them to put words on sentences. The teacher can measure his or her students' ability in making sentences by having students select the correct word to use in a sentence. For instance, teachers can make up multiple-choice test for the words that they know as following.

1) Match potato, Turkey with gravy and fish cake are all taste \_\_\_\_\_.

a) Salty      b. Bitter      c. **Delicious**      d. Sugary

2) Pancake, Maple Syrup, and Honey are all \_\_\_\_\_ food.

a) Tasty      b. Bitter      c. Sugary      d. Plain

3) Susanna thinks olives, lemon, and coffee are \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. Syrupy    b. Bitter      c. Nasty      d. Vanilla

#### 6. Creating Sentences Using New Words

At the final stage, the teacher should ask his or her students to generate sentence for the new words *delicious*, *bitter*, and *sugary*, such as:

1) The Pankcake is sugary. 2) Medicine tastes bitter. 3) This burger is very delicious.

#### 2.4. Word Association and Technology:

According to the (<http://wordassociations.net>) that is an online program which is based on V.V. Morkovkin's book «Ideographic Dictionaries» [20](1970). It provides a list of associated words by clicking the search button. This website contains three estainal parts: an associative dictionary, an explanatory dictionary, and a picture dictionary. Association words connected by similarity, contrast and contiguity. Association with a similar focus on synonyms that expressing same meanings. However, association by contrast, is based on antonyms that representing dissimilar meanings. In addition, association by contiguity is related to in continuous connected words that situated in space and time. For example, if the user enters the word "Star" on the search button, he or she will find plenty of classified association awards such as "movie", "shine", and "bright" as shown on figure. 3

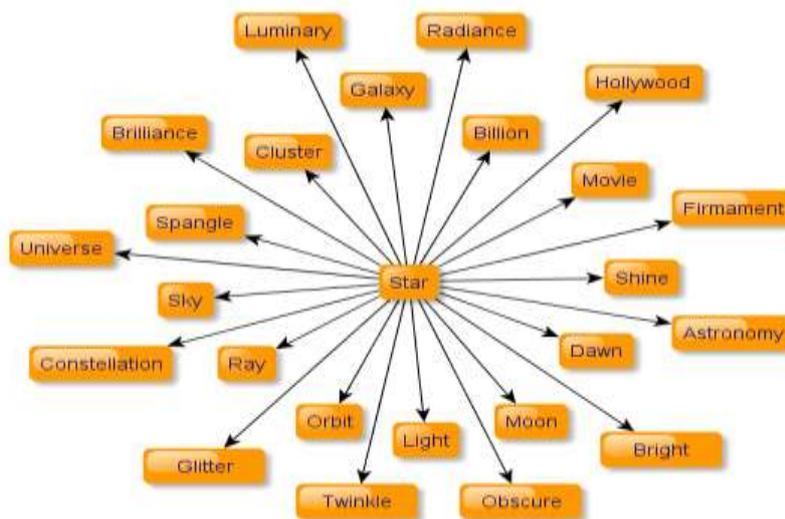


Figure (3) Star and Associated Meanings (Adopted from <http://wordassociations.net>)

#### 3.0. Research Methodology:

##### 3.1. The Instruments:

Survey and SPSS Analysis.

These instruments will be used as tools for collecting evidence and justification for questions.

##### 3.2. Research Design:

The researchers will use a qualitative and quantitative standard of research.

##### 3.3. Participants:

The participants were the EFL teachers at Jazan University. They were 30 teachers who participated in the study in this year 2015. All teachers are international and speak English language. They come from nine different nationalities

except one is Saudi. The teachers' nationalities are Sudanese, Indians, Pakistanis, Bangalis, Americans, British, Saudi, Senegalis, Canadian and Egyptian.

**Table (1) Teachers' Nationalities**

| Country | Sudan | India | Pakistan | Bang. | USA | UK | KSA | Canada | Sengal | Egypt |
|---------|-------|-------|----------|-------|-----|----|-----|--------|--------|-------|
| Numb.   | 7     | 6     | 6        | 3     | 2   | 2  | 1   | 1      | 1      | 1     |

**4.0. Research Questions:**

To what extent do teachers interested in using word association in teaching?

To what extent does the word association method more important for teachers?

To what extent do teachers have positive attitudes regarding to word association method?

To what extent do teachers feel more motivated to teach via word association method?

**5.0. Assumptions:**

Teachers have positive thoughts toward using word association with students in classrooms.

Teachers have positive experiences of using word association effectively.

Teachers think that students prefer using word association to increase their vocabulary.

Teachers feel more motivated to teach via word association method.

**6.0. Discussion and Analysis:**

This study followed the statistical analysis for overall results of word association that used in teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL). The paper is in the form of tabular charts and graphs, and the analysis was done in the form of the comparison the percentages of the teachers through word association surey and continual observation of the impact of the word association application on their students' motivation so as to have better interaction, communication, and performance.

Having a look at the table (1) below, it is found that teachers can adopt a word association method to motivate themselves and involve their students learning English as a foreign language (LEFL).

**Table (2) Statistics of the Mean, Standard Deviation & Multiple Mode**

|                    | S. Agree | Agree  | Neural | S. Disagree | Disagree |
|--------------------|----------|--------|--------|-------------|----------|
| N valid            | 15       | 15     | 15     | 15          | 15       |
| Mean               | 6.533    | 14.667 | 4.400  | 1.200       | 3.200    |
| Std. Error of Mean | 0.9455   | 1.2176 | 0.4957 | 0.8177      | 0.7445   |
| Median             | 7.000    | 15.000 | 4.000  | 0.000       | 3.000    |
| Mode               | 7.0      | 20.0   | 4.0    | 0.0         | 3.0      |
| Std. Dev.          | 3.6619   | 4.7157 | 1.9198 | 3.1668      | 2.8835   |
| Variance           | 13.410   | 22.238 | 3.686  | 10.029      | 8.314    |
| Range              | 13.0     | 17.0   | 7.0    | 12.0        | 10.0     |
| Minimum            | 0.0      | 3.0    | 2.0    | 0.0         | 0.0      |
| Maximum            | 13.0     | 20.0   | 9      | 12.0        | 10.0     |
| Sum                | 98.0.0   | 2230.0 | 66.0   | 18.0        | 48.0     |

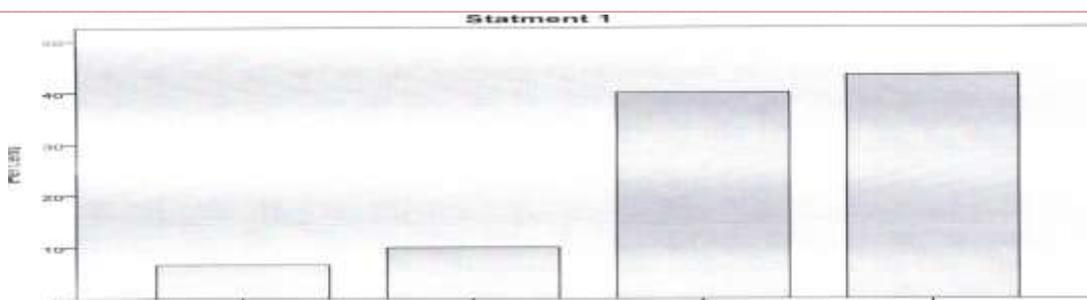


Fig.1.Using Word Association for Teaching Vocabulary

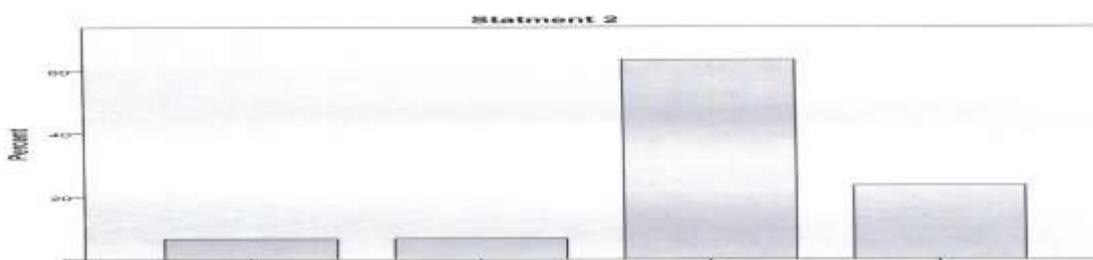


Fig.2.Motivation Word Association

Table.3.Vocabulary Association with Visualization

**Statment 3**

|         | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid D | 3         | 10.0    | 10.0          | 10.0               |
| N       | 4         | 13.3    | 13.3          | 23.3               |
| A       | 15        | 50.0    | 50.0          | 73.3               |
| SA      | 8         | 26.7    | 26.7          | 100.0              |
| Total   | 30        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

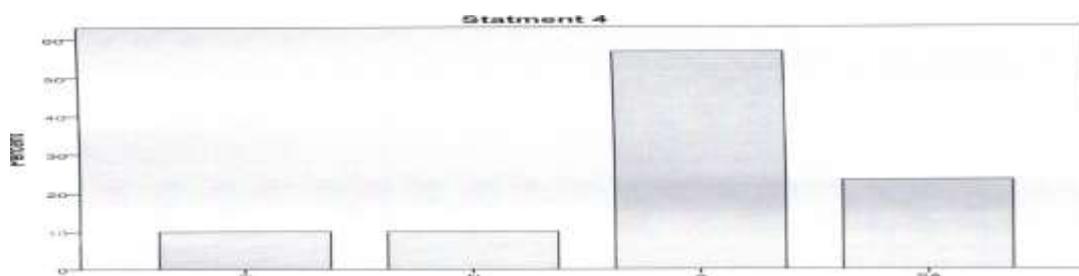


Fig.4.Motivation Word Association

Table.4.Teacher's Vocabulary Association Creation

**Statment 5**

|         | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid D | 3         | 10.0    | 10.0          | 10.0               |
| N       | 4         | 13.3    | 13.3          | 23.3               |
| A       | 14        | 46.7    | 46.7          | 70.0               |
| SA      | 9         | 30.0    | 30.0          | 100.0              |
| Total   | 30        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

**Table.5.Word Association Interest  
 Statment 6**

|       |       | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|-------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | D     | 3         | 10.0    | 10.0          | 10.0               |
|       | N     | 4         | 13.3    | 13.3          | 23.3               |
|       | A     | 16        | 53.3    | 53.3          | 76.7               |
|       | SA    | 7         | 23.3    | 23.3          | 100.0              |
|       | Total | 30        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

**Table.6.Increasing of English Vocabularythrough Association  
 Statment 13**

|       |       | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|-------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | N     | 2         | 6.7     | 6.7           | 6.7                |
|       | A     | 18        | 60.0    | 60.0          | 66.7               |
|       | SA    | 10        | 33.3    | 33.3          | 100.0              |
|       | Total | 30        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

Regarding the participants' perception of the using word association with students in classrooms (Q. No 13), (28 out 30=93.33%) of the teachers agreed that they think their students could increase English language vocabulary via word association method., results showed that teachers have positive attitudes toward this method. The participants' mean score on the using word association method techniques variable was quite positive. Participants reported that through word association method students can learn easily, and grades according to the following percentage in statements (12=90%, 2=86.66%, 11=86.66%, 1=83.33% and 4=80% respectively). It is clear that the majority of teachers feel well motivated in teaching via word association method. In addition they think this technique is very interesting and easy to be applied inside their classrooms. While the minority of the same statemnets were neutral or disagreed for this method, it is about ( 10% to 23.34%).

Furthermore, the negative thing of this method that Jazan university staff members are not familiar with *memrise.com*, as in statement 14 when they were asked about 'memrise.com' 46.66% were not familiar with this website and in statement (7 =63.33% ) of them agreed that imagination is good for teaching vocabulary. That means teachers are still need to know how to use technology and programs in teaching through word association. From this results, it is clear that teaching a foreign language vocabulary via word association method is effective and could be applied easily so as to motivate both teachers and their students and have better outcomes.

**7.0. Findings and Conclusion:**

The findings of the study are stating that learning vocabulary through word association impovered students vocabulary knowledge. The study admitted that word association had positive role in teaching vocabulary.

Therefore, the results of this study indicated that teachers in general prefer teaching vocabulary through word association strategies. In addition, the students who used word association became more proficient in studying medical terminologies by using various kinds of strategies than those who didn't use it, based on their teachers' observation. The survey of literature revealed a significant relationship between adopting word association techniques in these experiences and deeper teaching English as a foreign language in Jazan university. It was also found that the effective teaching and learning a language needs innovative and effective learning methods, strategies and techniques such as word association. Also, technological word association programs have advantages and it can also contribute to learning or expanding vocabulary. The teachers are aware of using word association and they think that this technique is interesting way in teaching vocabulary. In the light of the findings of this study, the researchers have come to conclusion that:

Teaching 'EFL' is very interested via word association method by increasing students' motivation, enhancement and performane.

The association method is more important for teachers and they considered it as an interesting strategy for teaching vocabulary.

Teachers have positive attitudes toward word association method.

Teachers face some problems in adopting an association method partuculary technological programs such as '*memrise.com*' [19].

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**Appendix**  
**Teachers' Attitudes**

| Statements  | S  | A  | N | SD | D  |
|---|----|----|---|----|----|
| 1. I use the word association method to teach vocabulary.   | 13 | 12 | 3 | 2  | 0  |
| 2. I feel well motivated to teach through word association method.                                      | 7  | 19 | 2 | 2  | 0  |
| 3. I associate new vocabulary with visual images.   | 8  | 15 | 4 | 3  | 0  |
| 4. I associate new vocabulary with sounds.  | 7  | 17 | 3 | 3  | 0  |
| 5. I create an association for new vocabulary for my students.  | 9  | 14 | 4 | 3  | 0  |
| 6. The word association method is interesting.  | 7  | 16 | 4 | 3  | 0  |
| 7. I believe that imagination is good for learning vocabulary.  | 8  | 11 | 7 | 4  | 0  |
| 8. I associate new vocabulary with characters to become unforgettable.                                  | 10 | 12 | 4 | 3  | 1  |
| 9. I let my students create a short story to associate new word in their minds.                         | 3  | 13 | 9 | 4  | 1  |
| 10. I do not think the word association method is good for learning vocabulary.                         | 0  | 3  | 6 | 9  | 12 |
| 11. I would like to use the word association method with my students.                                   | 6  | 20 | 4 | 0  | 0  |
| 12. I think student could recall new vocabulary that they learn easily through word association method. | 7  | 20 | 3 | 0  | 0  |
| 13. I think my students could increase English language vocabulary via word association method.         | 10 | 18 | 2 | 0  | 0  |
| 14. I am familiar with 'memorize.com'.  | 0  | 10 | 6 | 10 | 4  |
| 15. I want to learn more how to associate words in many languages.                                      | 3  | 20 | 5 | 2  | 0  |