

STRATEGIES FOR VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT IN THE DOMAIN OF ENGINEERING

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Introduction:

With the growth of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in the professional and technical areas of study, vocabulary learning strategies are considered to be one of the most important factors for student success in learning English. The current study aimed to investigate vocabulary learning strategies use of engineering students; and vocabulary learning strategies used by engineering students whose education backgrounds were on different streams. Strategies play a key role in language learning. Teachers need to teach and train learners about this dynamic nature of words to become efficient users of the English language and its Vocabulary. Vocabulary is a prerequisite for us to understand and use any language. Developing the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing, it is an important concept to master in vocabulary. Vocabulary is that the learners regularly report lack of Vocabulary as a significant problem in learning the English language. A theorist said that Language acquirers carry dictionaries with them, not grammar books. Learning an enormous amount of vocabulary words is a daunting task for nonvoice learners. When this is the requirement for the native learners, it is tough for secondary-level ESL learners to acquire the required number of words to communicate efficiently.

The crucial factor for achieving these skills is the size of vocabulary one possesses, as words are the building blocks of a language. Vocabulary is derived as a significant part of any language's semantics (Fan, 2003). In this context, vocabulary acquisition is currently receiving much greater attention in English research as second language pedagogy. This strategy encourages students' active participation in meaningful learning activities. Under this approach, it is viewed that vocabulary teaching should be incorporated with the regular transaction of the text, tasks, and actions rather than explicitly instructed. However, the process of incidental acquisition is slow and fragile (Nation, 2001). The Nation holds that it is not easy to know how words are learned and which stories will be remembered. A growing body of research shows that instructional intervention supports the learning process, and explicit instruction of vocabulary learning strategies effectively enhances learners' vocabulary knowledge.

Research Problem:

It is observed in Andhra Pradesh that most of the ESL learners of the Engineering level, specifically learners of the rural background, do not have adequate vocabulary stock

or required vocabulary size. As a result, these learners do not have sufficient reading ability/proficiency in the target language (L2). It is also inferred that inadequate vocabulary size, knowledge, and lack of required strategies would cause a significant hindrance to their required linguistic proficiency and would cause a low confidence level in them towards the English Language. Learners interest in vocabulary learning strategies will arouse when the researcher engage them in an academic interaction as a part of teaching. Many students voiced their views about the difficulty in memorizing and retaining English words and using them in both speaking and writing. They had also realized that their small vocabulary size had hampered their useful English learning abilities. It was also learned that they had not been made aware of the appropriate ways to learn and use Vocabulary in their academic and communicative needs. It was noted that despite studying English for about 12 years, they still found it difficult to read and process a simple reading text appropriate to their level. They remained silent and idle when they were supplied with a text to read and later complained that they could not decipher the meaning of many words from the texts given. Their general and previous knowledge was lacking in processing English texts. These existing gaps in English proficiency also made them discontinue mainstream studies and opt for vocational programs. The learners could not successfully process any reading text on their own. "It was due to various reasons: marks or grade-oriented instruction, ill-equipped notions of teaching, absence of rich English exposure, no proper reading-based activities or habits and primarily due to lack of adequate vocabulary knowledge." A careful analysis of how textbooks approach and value the teaching of vocabulary knowledge in Andhra Pradesh's English textbooks reveals that vocabulary learning has not deserved greater attention. Books, however, do not provide adequate activities for developing and strengthening all aspects of word knowledge.

Minimal emphasis is laid on the component of vocabulary learning practice. This implies that receiving systematic exposure to all of the different aspects of word knowledge has not been ensured for the learners. Also, an essential opportunity for recycling Vocabulary through a range of word knowledge-related activities is missing. Hence, this linguistic gap needed to be bridged. After textbooks, the teacher is probably the next best resource in the classroom to introduce new Vocabulary and provide crucial information on words, meaning, and use. Hence, teachers' direct intervention in vocabulary learning deserves to occupy a substantial part of any teaching and learning program. Teachers can bank on the extensive research base on vocabulary learning and teaching to inform instruction (Harmon, Wood, & Hedrick, 2008). In this research summary, some essential understandings of vocabulary learning and teaching are very much relevant.

Explicit training of VLSs at the engineering level is a necessary intervention in the light of prevailing conditions in the rural context of Andhra Pradesh. Thereby choosing appropriate strategies that help learners build effective vocabulary learning methods, this

study aims at an intervention program for enabling the learners to achieve the required learning goals in the target language.

Research aim and objectives

The present study primarily explores the feasibility of explicit instruction in vocabulary learning strategies using appropriate vocabulary teaching material. It aims at promoting independent vocabulary learning ability in rural Engineering students. Subsequently, learners are exposed to different aspects of vocabulary knowledge through simple, authentic reading texts, graded according to their existing reading proficiency. The study seeks to find answers for the following research questions:

Research Questions

1. What is the learners' existing level of Vocabulary?
2. What are the factors responsible for the learners' low proficiency in Vocabulary?
3. Which vocabulary learning strategies would help the learners enhance independent learning ability?
4. Which aspects of vocabulary knowledge should the learners be made aware of?
5. To what extent will improvement in vocabulary knowledge impact the learners' performance in English?

Review of Literature:

The theoretical framework or review of the literature aims to get familiarized with the theories and collected reviews of literature available in the field of second language vocabulary instruction.. According to Zimmerman (1997), "Vocabulary is a prerequisite for successful language learning.It is unarguable that knowledge of vocabulary plays a pivotal role in one's own academic and professional career". No one denies that Vocabulary plays a vital role in mastering the four language skills-listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in English language learning. It is a widely acknowledged concept by a majority of linguists. No one can communicate in a meaningful way without Vocabulary. According to Bowen et al. (1985, p. 322) and McCarthy (1990, p. iix), the single and larger component of any language syllabus could be Vocabulary. This claim is further strengthened by Nation (1990), "whose study affirms that learners see Vocabulary as an important element in language learning. Learners feel that many of their difficulties, in both receptive and productive language use, result from the lack of vocabulary knowledge. To ensure successful learning/acquisition, learners need a mental process that connects words to their world and previous linguistic experiences. But this process indeed is intricate. Due to vocabulary learning complexity, vocabulary learning strategies have been developed to acquire Vocabulary relatively easily and comfortably.

This study proposes to solve their problem or attempts to arrive at a few feasible solutions with the help of suitable instructional strategies in vocabulary teaching and

learning. However, the language instruction/ vocabulary instruction's efficacy depends on the learner's innate abilities, interests, and active participation during classroom activities. In other words, factors: attitudes, willingness/motivation, previous knowledge, the learning activities tasks at hand, and the learning ambiance (e.g., the learning culture, the richness of input and output opportunities) contribute to the success rate of any language instruction or intervention programs. A well-planned vocabulary lesson based on contemporary pedagogical principles will guarantee that learners will acquire the vocabulary taught. Nonetheless, the present researcher is convinced that given the willingness and readiness of teachers and learners to learn and apply vocabulary learning strategies will take them a long way in achieving the goal of required vocabulary proficiency in second language learning.

Research methodology:

The current intervention study will conduct in three subsequent stages or phases. **In phase I**, the purpose is to know and comprehend English language teaching/ learning in general and Vocabulary learning in particular. **In phase II**, an intervention program on teaching vocabulary learning strategies is taken up. It is also to see that the learners get equipped with the required vocabulary knowledge for both receptive and productive purposes. **In phase III, the researcher** conducts an assessment of the intervention program undertaken with the learners. Two post-assessment tests evaluate the learners' use of strategies taught and their degree of improvement about aspects of vocabulary knowledge.

- The learners are not aware of various vocabulary learning strategies.

The learners were not given opportunities to use any vocabulary items if taught for productive purposes.

- They do not have good bilingual/monolingual dictionaries to refer to the meaning of words in context.

- The Vocabulary was never contextualized earlier in their classroom practices.

Choosing Vocabulary Teaching and Learning Strategies, the researcher considers the strategies listed below for an effective classroom transaction. They include:

- Learning Vocabulary through familiar and unfamiliar reading texts.
- Learning Vocabulary through authentic or real-life listening contexts.
- Learning and using Vocabulary through both oral and written communicative contexts.
- Vocabulary learning through simple tasks and activities by integrating all four skills. The steps followed for autonomous learning of Vocabulary by the learners are mentioned below as they are assumed to be more suitable and useful in the context of the present study.
- Keeping a vocabulary notebook.
- Using a monolingual dictionary.
- Guessing the meaning of a word from its context.
- Word mapping

Assessment of the Learners During the final phase, i.e. in phase III of the research, the learners are administered two post tests -Post-test1 and Post-test2- termed as 'progress check

level tests' to assess the degree of improvement that has taken place in learning and using of Vocabulary in given contexts. The former includes an unfamiliar reading passage meant for checking understanding of word meanings in contexts and the overall meaning (theme) of the text given. The post test I serves twin purposes. One is to assess the learners' improved comprehension ability (receptive skill in terms of understanding the given text) and the other is to know the learners' increased knowledge in vocabulary aspects in the same text. The post test II consists of various vocabulary exercises targeting various aspects of vocabulary size and knowledge. After assessing the learners' improvement, a feedback session is conducted to collect responses of strategies that are employed in learning Vocabulary and the opinions of the intervention programme. In the end, the learners are also assessed regarding the use of specific strategies and their perceived usefulness in the form of a survey questionnaire on Vocabulary Learning Strategies.

The present study is a case study. This study explores and describes a phenomenon in the form of an intervention and the real-life context in which it occurred. Here the intervention is strategy training in promoting independent vocabulary learning in a specific ESL context. The researcher employs the method of 'triangulation' for collecting and collating data. The data is both qualitative and quantitative in nature. The data will collect through questionnaires, diagnostic test or pretest, informal interviews, everyday input materials, vocabulary worksheets, observations, learners' notebooks, and post-tests (post-assessment tests). Data analysis and interpretation the data analysis is both qualitative and quantitative. The study will conduct with twenty information subjects belonging to specific rural ESL backgrounds, tests are pre-tests at hand from other sources and are triangulated for the current study. The analysis of the trials and further assessment will do both qualitatively and quantitatively. The data will gather from vocabulary tasks/worksheets, observation, learner diaries, interviews, post-tests, and survey questionnaires are undertaken. Data collects are tabulated and shown using appropriate bar graphs. The data interpretation will do qualitative techniques like thick description and Think Aloud Protocol (TAP), etc.

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