

NEWSPAPERS: A GATEWAY TO ACQUIRE VOCABULARY

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Abstract

English- a global language is learnt across the world and the demand for English for academic and professional reasons is still on the rise. The most prominent aspect for any language learner is vocabulary as it provides the learners the confidence to express themselves more explicitly and confidently. Furthermore, the language learning process becomes more interesting and leaves a lasting effect if it is done in an entertaining way. The objective of this paper is to enumerate how newspapers can be of great help to learn vocabulary. The newspaper “The Hindustan Times’ Hindustan Times café” was chosen for teaching vocabulary to the first year engineering students to add entertainment to vocabulary learning. Pre-test and Post-test were given to the students before and after reading the selected portion of the paper. It was observed that the students were enthusiastic to read Bollywood Masala and to learn vocabulary. It was really a fun for them to learn in an anxiety-free friendly atmosphere. The result of this experiment was positive. Thus, this present paper attempts to draw attention to the widening significance of vocabulary learning for fluent communication in English language and need of paradigm shift in the way ELT takes place in the classrooms.

Keywords: Newspapers, Vocabulary Building, Communication, English Language, Fluency

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NEWSPAPERS: A GATEWAY TO ACQUIRE VOCABULARY

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Introduction

Language is our fundamental source of communication that helps us share our thoughts and feelings with others. In today's global and digital world, the significance of English Language has increased manifold since English has become the lingua franca of the entire world. Furthermore, English has been playing a phenomenal role in many sectors including medicine, engineering, education and fast-paced developing technology in this modern world. Significantly, English plays a major role in the field of education. It has taken a very important role in the Indian educational context. Furthermore, the students are encouraged to learn English as a second language. At the university level, students in India study almost all their subjects in English and make it a must to have command on it.

With the increasing demand for English, Vocabulary learning has become crucial to English language acquisition because communication cannot take place without words. The Learners with limited knowledge of vocabulary find it very difficult to express themselves to others. Thus, vocabulary acquisition has become a must for the second language learners to communicate effectively. Due to this, it has become imperative for the English language teachers to find innovative ways for vocabulary teaching to arrest student's attention in the class and make the teaching and learning process interesting at the same time.

This paper enumerates how Newspapers could be used in the classroom to develop and sharpen the learners' word bank. Though there are multiple ways to increase the vocabulary of the second language learners, the researcher decided to focus on newspapers (Hindustan Times) as a means of vocabulary learning.

The present study aims to unveil the utility of vocabulary learning to the first year engineering students with a tint of entertainment and seeks to investigate whether the use of newspaper can help to enhance student's vocabulary to improve their speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. Some researchers (Twaddell, 1973; Wilkins, 1974; Richards, 1976;

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Judd, 1978; Laufer, 1981; Morgan and Rinvoluceri, 1986; Carter and McCarthy, 1988; and Parker, 1989) claim that little importance has been given to vocabulary and the teaching of vocabulary or learning new words and phrases are often seen as an unimportant value, and it is even neglected most of the time in foreign language teaching.

Literature Review

Merriam Webster defines vocabulary as “a sum or stock of words employed by a language, group, individual, or work or in a field of knowledge. Oxford dictionaries states, the words used in a particular subject or sphere of activity or on a particular occasion. As per Cambridge dictionary, vocabulary is “all the words known and used by a particular person”. In the recent digital era, the significance of vocabulary acquisition has been emphasized by researchers, in that vocabulary acquisition plays a crucial role in learning a second language (Allen, 1983; Laufer, 1986; Nation, 1990; Richards, 1980; cited in Lawson and Hoghen, 1996).

As Wilkins (1974: 111) states, without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed. Morgan and Rinvoluceri (1986) also emphasize that words are essential and lack of them leads to a feeling of insecurity in language learning. Wilkins (1974: 131) states that learning nothing but words and a little and no structure would be useless to the 6 learner. He further adds structure and vocabulary are acquired together. Thus, Wilkins study proved that vocabulary teaching and learning can progress through the incorporation of structure and vocabulary. Therefore it can be very well said that vocabulary learning is of paramount importance in English language acquisition. Sokmen (1997) summarizes the way vocabulary has usually been handled:

For many of us, our perspective on the teaching of vocabulary was greatly influenced by the top-down, naturalistic approaches of the 1970s and 1980s. The emphasis was implicit, incidental learning of vocabulary. We were taught the importance of directing L2 learners to recognize clues in context. Textbooks emphasize inferring word meaning from context as the primary vocabulary skill (p.237).

Research Question

The reasoning has been attempted by taking the below-motivated research question:
Can Newspaper be used as a gateway for teaching and learning vocabulary to the students?

Aim of the Study

This study seeks to use Newspaper to acquire and improvise Vocabulary for the second

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language learners. Furthermore, it also attempts to find out if Newspaper can become an effective way of learning vocabulary.

Materials

The researcher chose Newspaper- *The Hindustan Times' Hindustan Times café*” for this experiment. The newspaper was chosen based on the level of English of the first year engineering students. The students for the experiment were a mixed group having upper basic and intermediate level of proficiency in English and were given a copy of the same newspaper.

Research Method

Newspaper The Hindustan Times Hindustan Times café” was chosen for teaching vocabulary to add entertainment to vocabulary learning to the first year engineering students.

Hindustan Times café was specially selected for this experiment as it tells us the lifestyles and the inside stories of acclaimed mainstream Bollywood celebrities (Hindi cinema). Moreover, it has been observed that Bollywood masala stories have a great power to arrest the attention of students for a long time.

The participants in the experiment were 15 students from engineering first year. Before giving them the *Hindustan Times café*, the students were given a pre-test to understand if they know the words which they will be studying and noticing while reading the newspaper. Later, they were also oriented and made aware of the words used in the newspaper. After the pre-test and orientation the students were handed over a list of words which they had to notice and study while reading the newspaper.

The students were asked to pay heed to the words and remember the structured way (parts of speech) it was framed and the context in which it was used. All the students were given a copy of the same newspaper. Also, they were asked to go through the newspaper portion twice a day for five days for better retention of the words. After then, the students were given a post-test/ Retention test to know if they have learnt the words or lexical chunks so as to perceive the meaning. The students were then asked to present a role play in the same context where they could use the words or the lexical chunks learnt from the newspaper. The role play helped them to use the words learned in the real time conditions.

Following words were chosen from *The Hindustan Times' Hindustan Times café*”:

Turned down; gearing up; take up; live in the moment; dwell on the past; head on the shoulder; substantial; create a niche for oneself; riding high on the success; catches up;

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frivolous; following ones footsteps; ventured into; perks; hail from; in the limelight; deliberate plagiarism; hands-on; fascinating experience; significant achievement; intend to; apprised of; crave for; to broach a contentious issue; brood over; to take precedence over something; embrace; acumen; sought after; turbulence; buffs; bestow love; to bag a deal; on the cards; curb; to burn the midnight oil; to reign in; to pose difficulties; to fight a lost battle; immense help; conscious effort; barring; mettle; fitness regimen; the stick and carrot approach; sort out; a ploy towards a great escape; selling like hot cakes; hold back; wishy-washy; binge on; navigate through; count on; juggle up.

Findings/ Results

The question of better retention is of utmost significance to any approach for vocabulary learning and it was observed that the scores in the post test increased by 35% than obtained in pre-test. It was also observed that the students felt more confident using the language in the classroom in the role play situations as they had already learned the lexical chunks. As Peacock

(1997:144) states “authentic materials like newspapers bring learners closer to the target language culture, making learning more enjoyable and therefore more motivating.

The students were able to make use of the below-mentioned words/ lexical chunks with a better comfort and confidence that before:

Live in the moment; dwell on the past; head on the shoulder; catches up; following ones footsteps; ventured into; perks; hail from; in the limelight; hands-on; fascinating experience; significant achievement; intend to; crave for; brood over; embrace; sought after; turbulence; to bag a deal; on the cards; curb; to burn the midnight oil; to reign in; to pose difficulties; to fight a lost battle; immense help; conscious effort; mettle; fitness regimen; the stick and carrot approach; sort out; a ploy towards a great escape; selling like hot cakes; hold back; navigate through; count on; juggle up.

Conclusion

Vocabulary plays a significant role in language acquisition especially for the second language learners. It also helps them using the right words in the right context and helps them express explicitly. Thus, it is obvious that the more words we know, the more precisely we can communicate with others in a natural way. Thus, one of the easiest teaching aids of learning

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vocabulary is using English newspapers in English language classroom. As Sanderson (1999) states newspapers have many benefits:

The enormous variety of subject matter in newspapers means that any one newspaper will invariably contain something of value or concern to every reader. This makes them interesting and motivating for students to work with. Newspapers report real-life events, and this arouses our natural curiosity about the world around us and our fellow human beings. (Sanderson 1999: 3)

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