SRI RAMAKRISHNA ENGINEERING COLLEGE

11th International Congress on English Grammar (ICEG 2014)
In association with Systemic Functional Linguistics

Grammar and Grammar Teaching:
Changing Perspectives
Volume 2

Editor
Dr. Vathana Fenn

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Examining the Effects of Using Two Different Strategies for the Learning Process of Vocabulary and Its Retention Level

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Abstract

English serves as a link language among people of different regions with different mother-tongues and backgrounds. It is always accepted as an asset in the form of national and international language representing educational and economic progress. Various teachers have expressed their view about the language, its acquisition, methodology, its importance and its use. The fact that individuals differ in their vocabulary knowledge may result in successful and unsuccessful communication skills. "Researchers in L2 vocabulary acquisition and use may agree that L2 vocabulary knowledge is essential in L2 text comprehension" (Laufer, 1997).

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 14:4 April 2014**
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Importance of Vocabulary

"Vocabulary is an essential element of communication" (Lubliner et al., 2008). Vocabulary is a vital part of lingual expression. Enhancing the word power is sought after by students and professionals alike as it lends fluidity to words and conveys the most appropriate idea that is in one's mind. "It is widely circulated that the English language has the largest vocabulary of any language, but this claim is difficult to formulate precisely, and essentially impossible to prove" (Kleiser 2009). A good knowledge of words helps in an effective presentation of ideas, oral as well as written. It creates an impact on the listeners or readers about the communicator as being a learned and erudite person.

Focus of This Paper

This paper was carried out to investigate the impact of the use of two different types of strategies: (1) Morphemic Analysis and (2) Word Splash. Also, this paper discusses the participant's performance on immediate and delayed vocabulary post-tests in order to identify their retention level. Furthermore, it answers the question how effective is our English Class when a word is taught through appropriate strategies?

Introduction

In India, English is used much more for the purpose of communication rather than day-to-day conversation. Language for employability or to run a business is playing a major role at present. For this very reason, it becomes necessary to train our learners to communicate effectively in order to get success in life. At present, students in college are expected to communicate effectively. On balancing language skills equally, the basic fundamental requirement is the adequate mastery of the Vocabulary of English Language.

Vocabulary is vital for the structure of the sentence. It has been increasingly recognized as essential for the use of English Language. Vocabulary has to be taught in order to train the learners to use words precisely for more effective communication. This paper investigates the impact of involving in two different types of vocabulary learning strategies, i.e., (1) Morphemic Analysis and (2) Word Splash.

Also, this paper discusses the participant's performance in pre-test for control group (CG) and experimental group (EG) and immediate post-tests and delayed post-tests for experimental group in order to identify their retention level. Furthermore, it answers the question how effective is our English Class when a word is taught through appropriate strategies.

The Importance of Vocabulary in English Language

Today English has become the international language of the world. Teaching and learning of vocabulary has an important position in English Language Teaching (ELT). It is a vital part of education. The language of English is taught in India in different types of schools, colleges and in various states, in a number of ways and circumstances. In some places, the teaching is well done enough to obtain high marks in public examinations but the objectives of learning a language are not achieved adequately. It is clear that enhancement of vocabulary is a certain possibility through constant practice and training.

Building Rich Vocabulary

Building a rich vocabulary is an enjoyable activity. It is not dull or tedious. The first step is to develop the proper attitude for learning words. If the initial step is taken for learning words then, half the battle is won.

Those who are rich in words will appreciate technical concepts better, since they have a fine knowledge of the sharp meaning of words. A student, while learning a lesson, may come across the word 'resistance' (refusal to accept). If he knows the meaning of the word in general use, he will quickly learn the philosophy of Ohm's Law. The technical meaning of any word is related to its meaning in common phrase.

Rich vocabulary is not a natural gift. It is something to build through effort. Students learning technical or non-technical subjects will be hugely benefitted by developing their vocabulary.

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Today in college education, general and technical vocabulary is very essential for the students. Students may be good at their subject of specialization but they may not have acquired adequate vocabulary. So it is important for us to create an atmosphere to learn vocabulary in their class. Those who are rich in words will appreciate technical concepts better, since they have a fine knowledge of the sharp meaning of words.

Literature Review

Enriching vocabulary will help a lot in enhancing your communication ability. "Words, so innocent and powerless as they are, standing in a dictionary; how potent for good and evil they become in the hands of one who knows how to choose and combine them." —Nathaniel Hawthorne (American novelist, 1804 –1864))

"English was studied as a compulsory subject at the secondary and higher secondary levels of education and was also used as a medium of instruction at higher levels of education and was the medium of communication with the outside world." (Rahman, 1999). "The aim of English is to help students to take "control of the four skills and to use these skills in real life situations "- Rahman, 1996 P.45. Context is perceived by Beheydt (1987) as the most important requirement to vocabulary learning from the perspective that learning words is a process of "semantization", i.e., a continuing process of getting acquainted with verbal forms within varying contexts or varying exercises.

Beheydt pointed out that the semantization process in vocabulary learning should be based on a provision of a number of concrete representative usages of each word, the meanings of which are more easily semantized, if they are embedded in a meaningful context and stimulated by repetitive mental practice. The more extensive the context, the greater the cognitive support for the semantization to take place. This view of word learning calls upon taking into account the construct of knowing a word and the cognitive process involved in the examination of vocabulary learning.

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Strategies for Learning

Learning strategies, according to Schmitt (2004), are important in acquiring information and learners consciously use strategies while they learn. Most research on vocabulary learning strategies has therefore explored various methods of vocabulary presentation and their corresponding effectiveness in retention (Meara, 1980).

According to Jasmina Hasanbegovic (2007), "learning strategies refer to students' self-generated thoughts, feelings and actions, which are systematically oriented towards attainment of their goals. Learning strategies are those strategies which learners employ for learning and achieving their learning goal. It can be understood as those "behaviors and thoughts that a learner engages during learning." Learners use those strategies to facilitate the internalization, memory, storage and retrieval of information. Learning Strategy instruction focuses on making students more active learners by teaching them how to learn and how to use what they have learned to be successful." (Strategic Instruction Model, 2009)

Most research on vocabulary learning strategies has therefore explored various methods of vocabulary presentation and their corresponding effectiveness in retention (Meara, 1980). Hence most studies are on memory strategies, one of the many aspects of vocabulary learning strategies, on the presupposition that strategies good for vocabulary retention will also benefit language learning in general.

Vocabulary Learning Strategies

There are many words which the students don't know what they mean. So, the facilitator should encourage the students to read any articles related to any field, in order to make them aware of their knowledge outside of their academic field, which will provide general ideas about any particular event. This is especially true because the format of the passages gives many chances to understand the vocabulary to develop language skills.

Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) are those strategies that learners employ to comprehend, learn and retain words. Vocabulary knowledge is essential in learning a foreign language. Language learners know the importance of words in a language, but they may or may

not be aware of the fact that VLS can help them to learn vocabulary successfully. With the emergence of the concept of Language Learning Strategies (LLS), scholars have attempted to link these strategies with language learning skills, believing that each strategy enhances learning of vocabulary, pronunciation, etc.

As understood from the detailed description of learning strategies, learning strategies help achieve learning goals.

Present Study

The present study administered a questionnaire to the students to know about their use of strategies for learning vocabulary. The analysis of the questionnaire revealed that students apply some of the strategies for learning vocabulary. These strategies are very important as they involve processes such as memorization, drill practice, etc., for acquiring and storing information. Considering all these important factors, this study aims to develop activities based on strategies for learning vocabulary.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- To understand basic vocabulary ability and efficiency between control group and experimental group.
- To observe the effect of difference in English Vocabulary efficiency between control group and experimental group.
- To observe English Vocabulary enhancement and its retention.

Research Design

Students are usually expected to learn vocabulary on their own, mostly by mechanical memorization, without much guidance from teachers. However, merely giving students lists of words to learn does not result in effective learning.

1. Morphemic analysis: Morphemic analysis is a strategy used to determine or infer the meanings of words by examining their meaningful parts (prefixes, suffixes, roots, meanings, etc).

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2. Word Splash is a vocabulary strategy that uses pre-reading, during reading, and after reading. It is fun and easy to use. Word Splash is a collection of terms or concepts from a reading or other activities which students are about to see or hear. Students come up with complete sentences connecting two or more of the words or phrases. Afterwards, they check their writings in groups against what is written.

This paper is the result of classroom experience in which a few strategies were used to encourage the students to acquire vocabulary. At the same time the students were also provided the reading passages to improve their reading skills and vocabulary.

Research Methodology

The present study was designed to examine the basic vocabulary ability and efficiency between control group and experimental group. A questionnaire was designed for 352 students. The reading passages were selected as survey report and short passages with jokes. And immediate test and delayed post-tests were also conducted in order to examine vocabulary retention ability.

A total number of 352 students from an engineering college had participated in this study during the year of 2013. 68 were females and 284 were males. The age of the students ranged from 17 to 19, with a mean of 92.53 students who had been studying through English medium.

The data collection took two months for all sections to complete. It was administered in the students' regular English classes. Two reading texts were selected in which 10 questions were asked to examine 10 target words. And 4 Conversation short passages with jokes were selected in which 13 questions were asked to examine 13 target words. So totally 23 words have been selected and tested among the students in the mode of control group and experimental group. The respondents were asked to fill the answers by choosing the best answer from among the several answers given.

Before filling the questionnaire, the students personal information was also collected which included their family background, parents' occupation, their previous school details, X

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standard Marks, XII Standard Marks, Parents academic qualification, etc. They were asked to give their details as honesty as possible. Paired T-test and Anova methods were used to obtain the pattern of information

Data Testing Methodologies Used

The methodology adopted for the present study is Pre-Test and Post-Test. According to Oxford (1990), "Learning strategies are specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations" (p.8). Scholars have attempted to link these strategies with language learning skills believing that each strategy enhances learning of vocabulary, pronunciation, etc. In this regard, O'Malley, et al. (1990) claims that most LLS are used for completion vocabulary learning tasks. In Brown's model, statistical studies are further subdivided into survey studies and experimental studies. Survey studies investigate a group's attitudes, opinions, or characteristics, often through some form of questionnaire analysis.

The questionnaire is a relatively popular means of collecting data. It enables the researcher to collect data in field settings, and the data themselves are more amenable to quantification than discursive data such as free-form field notes, participant observers' Journals, and the transcripts of oral language. This methodology is adopted because this study involves hypothesis testing, that is, the hypothesis formulated for the study is tested to prove or disprove the effectiveness of the study. This survey uses questionnaires to collect data analysis and interpretation for the purpose of research. The collected data is further analyzed and interpreted.

Before starting the activities, the teacher should deliver the instructions in an effective manner so that the students should not have any confusion. The teachers can also ask the students to identify some unfamiliar academic vocabulary and to highlight them with several other meanings.

When they read the text in the series, the learners will encounter words such as *voracious, ecological, eradication, embarked,* etc. But many of these words are those which learners have met in the first and the second tests. In this way, proceeding through a sequence of

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tasks will reduce the number of the words unfamiliar to the learners and will help the learners to read more efficiently without being interrupted often by unknown words.

Level of Students

First, the teacher should be able to identify the level of students by giving personal questionnaire to them. Identify their background education, 10th standard marks, 12thstandard marks in English, details of parents, etc.

By introducing one or two strategies teachers can motivate students and facilitate friendly learning environment. Students need to focus on goals of academic competence, communication skills, personality development, etc. By following Vocabulary Learning Strategies, teachers can ensure that the students may receive many unknown words in English language.

The Appropriateness of Specific Activities

For certain activities teachers should set time limits. For the first and second strategy the time limit is only 45-50 minutes. The instructions should be given to help students finish the activity within the time limit.

Hypothesis

If words are introduced to the learners using strategies in specific reading passages, it will help improve their vocabulary proficiency and also improve the language skills.

Results and Discussion

The empirical results and discussion are briefly summarised in this section of the research paper.

H1: There exists no difference in the English vocabulary efficiency among the control and experimental group students in the pre-test stage of this research work.

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TABLE: 1
PAIRED t TEST
RESULTS OF PRE-TEST SCORES OF
ENGLISH VOCABULARY EFFICIENCY AMONG THE CONTROL AND
EXPERIMENTAL GROUP STUDENTS

Pairs	Variables	Mean	SD	Correlation
Survey report	Control Group	5.539	2.037	.027
	Experimental Group	**5.860**	1.996	
Conversation short passage	Control Group	7.118	2.760	.019
	Experimental Group	**7.573**	2.499	

Level of significance: 5 per cent

There exists lead correlation between the control group and experimental group test results in both the survey report reading skills and conversation report reading skill among the sample population. However, it could be concluded that the experimental group of students exhibits higher vocabulary understanding and reading skills compared to the control group sample students.

TABLE: 2
PAIRED SAMPLES TEST
ENGLISH VOCABULARY EFFICIENCY AMONG THE CONTROL AND
EXPERIMENTAL GROUP STUDENTS

Pairs	Mean	SD	t	DF	Sig
Survey report	.320	2.813	-1.519	177	.131
Conversation short passage	.455	3.689	-1.646	177	.102

Level of significance: 5 per cent

From the above table it may be inferred that probability value of 't' values are more than the table value at 5 per cent level of significance. Therefore the hypothesis framed stands rejected and it is concluded that there exists difference in the English vocabulary efficiency among the control and experimental group students in the pre-test stage of this research work.

H2: There exists difference in the English Vocabulary Efficiency of Pre-test and Post-test students among experimental group students.

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TABLE: 3
PAIRED t TEST
ENGLISH VOCABULARY EFFICIENCY OF PRE-TEST
AND POST-TEST STUDENTS

Pairs	Variables	Mean	SD	Correlation
Survey report	Pre-test	5.860	1.996	.076
	Post-test	**7.528**	1.276	
Conversation short passages	Pre-test	7.573	2.499	.036
	Post-test	**10.000**	2.017	

Level of significance: 5 per cent

It is observed that the mean score of the post-test results are comparatively higher than the pre-test results.

TABLE: 4
PAIRED SAMPLES TEST
ENGLISH VOCABULARY EFFICIENCY OF PRE-TEST
AND POST-TEST STUDENTS

Pairs	Mean	SD	t	DF	Sig
Survey report	-1.669	2.287	-9.735	177	.000
Conversation short passage	-2.427	3.155	-10.264	177	.000

Level of significance: 5 per cent

From empirical data analysis it is inferred that probability value of 't' values are less than the table value at 5 per cent level of significance. Similarly, the measures of mean score shows that the post-test score of the sample engineering students has improved in comparison to the pre-test score values. Therefore the hypothesis framed stands accepted and it is concluded that there exists difference in the English vocabulary efficiency of Pre-test and Post-test students.

H3: There exists difference in English Vocabulary Efficiency of engineering students in immediate memory test and short-term memory test.

TABLE: 4.
PAIRED t TEST
ENGLISH VOCABULARY EFFICIENCY OF STUDENTS IN IMMEDIATE
MEMORY TEST AND SHORT-TERM MEMORY TEST

Pairs	Variables	Mean	SD	Correlation
Survey report	Post-test I	7.528	.096	.106
	Post-test II	**8.191**	.141	

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Conversation short passage	Post-test I	10.000	.151	.405
	Post-test II	**11.522**	.179	

Level of significance: 5 per cent

It is observed that the mean score of the short-term results are comparatively higher than the immediate memory test results. i.e., survey report reading skills and conversation report reading skill among the experimental group students.

<p align="center">TABLE: 4.
PAIRED SAMPLES TEST
ENGLISH VOCABULARY EFFICIENCY OF STUDENTS IN IMMEDIATE
MEMORY TEST AND SHORT-TERM MEMORY TEST</p>

Pairs	Mean	SD	t	DF	Sig
Survey report	-.663	2.160	-4.095	177	.000
Conversation short passage	-1.522	2.424	-8.378	177	.000

Level of significance: 5 per cent

From the above table it is inferred that probability value of 't' values are less than the table value at 5 per cent level of significance. The empirical test results reveal that there exists difference in English vocabulary efficiency of engineering students in immediate memory test and short-term memory test.

Every student got equal opportunity to participate in the process. Students' pointed out successfully that they acquire vocabulary skills through task based methods. They chose this method as one of the best ways in acquiring language skills.

Conclusion

All the students had equal opportunity to participate in the process and they did participate. The students were able to positively engage in Communication skill Classes. They found both the strategies were equally good but they have scored more only in the strategy "Word Splash". They felt that this method was one of the better ways in acquiring the language.

"Take advantage of every opportunity to practice your communication skills so that when important occasions arise, you will have the gift, the style, the sharpness, the clarity, and the

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emotions to affect other people."- Jim Rohn. At the outset, they should make it a point to feel comfortable with learning complex words.

The intention of this study was to be part of a discussion of vocabulary learning. Cooperative learning encourages the use of language in a social context. Positive social interaction can help students perceive the classroom as a comfortable and friendly place, where they will feel safe using their new language skills. To enhance academic achievement, these various vocabulary learning strategies can create a language-rich classroom; provide students with advance organizers; label everything in the classroom to build vocabulary; to be aware of current affairs and help students make connections easily with their peers.

Meanwhile, this study concludes that the students will become well aware of using a word and they will become familiar with certain unknown words. Pedagogically, it is important and feasible that teachers play a more active role in students' vocabulary learning, as pointed out by Oxford and Scarcella (1994), by providing learners with systematic L2 vocabulary instruction, offering contextualized learning opportunities, helping students learn specific strategies for acquiring words, and showing students how to learn outside of their L2 classes. It also insists that students should be encouraged to learn vocabulary wisely both inside and outside of class for better communication.

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