

VOCABULARY ACQUISITION PLAYS AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN SHAPING THE CAREER OF ENGINEERING STUDENTS. AN OVERVIEW.

Dr. Bishnu Paramguru Mahapatra
Associate Professor in English
Dept. of BSH
GIET, University,
Gunupur, Rayagada
Pin -765022

Abstract

Words are the building blocks of the Language, without which no use of language is possible. It is with the use of words messages can be formed and that can be transacted in the process of communication. One of the serious problem which students of engineering face when trying to communicate in English is that of vocabulary deficit. The present paper will focus how vocabulary deficit really mars the fortune of the engineering students and will state different strategies to acquire pool of vocabulary to overcome the problem.

Key Words- Vocabulary acquisition, strategies, deficit.

Introduction.

Any form of communication through language spoken or written requires knowledge of the words as well as knowledge of the Grammatical rules by words are combined to form sentences which in turn helps in communication. Wilkins [30:111] puts forward that “without grammar, very little can be conveyed. Without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed.” It indicates acquisition of more vocabulary will help the engineering students to speak and write better.

The simplest definition of vocabulary is “the words of the language”. Vocabulary does not mean single words, but includes also lexical chunks. These are group of two or more words that convey a meaning in the same way a word does, and are learnt and retained in the memory as a single lexical unit.

Learning the vocabulary of a language is important simply because it is mainly the vocabulary which carries the meanings. One can easily convey what one desires to say through vocabulary alone with minimum knowledge of grammar but not the other way round.

Productive/Active vocabulary vs. receptive/passive vocabulary

All productive or active vocabulary involves words that we apply when we speak or

Write. According to Nation [1], productive use of vocabulary is and retrieving and producing the appropriate spoken or written word form [p. 25].

On the other hand, receptive or passive vocabulary is composed of words that we recognize when we hear or see. It is normally bigger than productive vocabulary, and may comprise numerous words to which we allocate some definitions, even if we do not understand their full meanings and implications or use them as we speak and write [23]. Nation [1] gives a detailed definition of receptive vocabulary.

In other words, receptive knowledge is the language input that learners receive from others through listening or reading and try to understand it. Productive knowledge, on the other hand, is the language output that learners convey messages to others through speaking or writing [24].

Depth of vocabulary knowledge

Read [27, p. 357] explained the notion of depth of word knowledge which is more absorbing from an L2 vocabulary acquisition research belief than just quantitative angles of lexical knowledge, as “the quality of the learner’s vocabulary knowledge “. Many researchers have emphasized the intricate and dynamic nature of this knowledge.

It is really obvious that knowing a word means knowing more than its single meaning in a specific text. Learners also need to know the pronunciation, spelling, syntactic and semantic relationship with other words such as collocation, synonym, antonym and hyponym [19]. So, vocabulary should not be considered a single dimension, instead it is better to be viewed as a multidimensional structure [28].

Depth of knowledge is a network of links between words. It is about how they associate and interact with each other, and may be restricted in use according to register and context. This would include, for example, how words collocate, form idioms and can have multiple possible meanings. Depth is generally used to refer to a wide variety of word characteristics, including the shades of meaning a word may carry, its connotations and collocations, the phrases and patterns of use it is likely to be found in, and the associations the word creates in the mind of the user. All of these imply that a word will be linked to other words and ideas in the lexicon and, provided these links are correct and appropriate, to enable learners to use their chosen words appropriately and well [11].

It has been estimated that a user of English needs a vocabulary or stock of words of about 6000-8000 words in order to be able to communicate effectively in everyday situations, where as the average Indian student has a vocabulary of only about 3000 words and that really causes the students to face problems while communicating in English.

Statement of the problem-

Engineering students while facing the interviews for placements face a great deal of problem in presenting the answers appropriately in response to questions put forth by the interviewers in placement exercises which has been a major concern for the students, teachers, parents and the management. Engineering students read English as a subject in the first year i.e. for two semesters. During the first year courses they keep on attending theory classes as well as lab classes. Teachers lay more emphasis on lab activities to develop the all round development of students. Lab activities are carried by the teachers in the forms of task and activities. Students are motivated to participate in all these task and activities positively. But the out of these task and activities become futile when the students fail to answers questions or to participate in a Group Discussion effectively because of lack of vocabulary or vocabulary deficit.

Difficulties faced by the Engineering students due to vocabulary deficit.

The students of engineering face the following problems in the class room because of lack of appropriate stock of vocabularies in their mind.

1. Inability in framing a sentence correctly.
2. Unable to transmit and interpret ideas correctly.
3. Unable to respond questions correctly because of inability in understanding questions correctly.

4. Always avoid the classes to participate in task and activities with fear and anxiety.
5. Unable to create ideas with the assignments of tasks in Speaking and Writing skills.
6. Stammer and fumble while participating in a Speaking activity.
7. Leave the written assignment half way through with numerous grammatical errors.
8. Unable to understand the text while reading.

The above problems are a few faced by the engineering students while participating in different activities in English amongst many.

Causes of the statement of the problem.

Words are usually learnt unconsciously. Learners 'pick up' the words which they hear or read, without realizing that they are being learnt. The greater the exposure to English, in spoken or written form, the larger will be the stock of English words that the learner acquires. In the past, most Indian learners of English, particularly those who were educated in ' Vernacular Medium ' schools in small towns or villages, had limited exposure to English outside the class room.

Little reading has been done in English beyond the prescribed textbooks by the Engineering students with a complain always stated by them is that less amount of time is left with them to read English because they have to study subjects with more of credit points.

They never so enthusiasm to talk in English outside the class room. They take the subject very lightly and never realize the importance of the same. They always prefer to speak to each other with their regional language rather than speaking in English.

They always love to watch movies in other languages and never show their interest to watch English movie. They do not show their inclination to listen to English news but they are always interested to listen to hindi music which will never help them to improve their vocabulary in English.

Strategies to be adopted by the Engineering Students to develop Vocabulary in English.

Students should devote as much time as they can spare to watch English programmes such as news bulletins, documentaries, interviews, debates and discussions etc. Which are available round the clock on international as well as national channels.

Reading ,even more than listening, provides a rich source for vocabulary enrichment. Print media, such as news papers and magazines, have to depend almost entirely on language. Words are only tool through which messages can be conveyed and writers, therefore, try to squeeze as much meaning out of words as possible. In recent years, Indian newspapers in English have undergone a transformation in content as well as format in order to attract readers and most reputed newspapers are generally packed with informative as well as interesting articles on a variety of subjects.

Engineering students should begin each day by reading one English newspaper.

They should go for extensive reading i.e. they should read English novels, short stories articles, magazines and make it a practice to acquire more vocabulary in English.

They should always look for new words or expressions that they come across in books, magazines, notices circulars, advertisements and look them up in the dictionary for meaning or can ask someone who could explain the meaning of the same.

They should always keep a vocabulary note book with them. When they come across with the new words should make a note of the same and should consult the dictionary for meaning. They should always use bilingual dictionary for faster and easier use of vocabulary.

Conclusion

The learning of words is largely an unconscious process. However, when the Engineering graduates find their vocabulary level in English is inadequate to meet their needs of communication, they should make deliberate and planned efforts to expand their stock of words, turning the unconscious process into a conscious one. They should give prompt attention to the meanings as well as the use of new words which they encounter in the course of listening and reading. As said by Wilkins, Without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed should be realized by the Engineering students and they should adopt the best practices as mentioned above to acquire vocabulary to meet the challenges around them in the placement exercises as well as day to day communication to overcome vocabulary deficit.

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