Original Article

The Retention Capacity of B-School Students while Learning New Words of Different Specializations

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Abstract: Expanding one's vocabulary can aid in the acquisition of skills and knowledge across a range of language and literacy domains. This involves aiding with understanding, fluency, and decoding (phonemic awareness and phonics). Without question, expanding one's vocabulary involves more than just picking up new terms; it also entails understanding how they work and when to use them. Therefore, the ability to comprehend and use the English language rests on the difficult task of identifying, comprehending, and producing messages using the proper word combinations at the appropriate time and location. This paper brings out the need to expand the vocabulary of B-school students by introducing them to words of different specializations and fields. It also highlights the retention capacity of the students with relation to the words learnt and used in classroom assignments. The study shows the difference in remembering words which are familiar in terms of the professional specialization chosen by the students, and words from other fields (e.g. Science) and specializations.

Keywords: Vocabulary, English, B-School, Specialization.

I. INTRODUCTION

Findings in countries where English is not the spoken language show that besides grammar and pronunciation, students require a solid foundation in vocabulary, too. Regardless of the level of a learner's competence in grammar and pronunciation, effective communication without sufficient vocabulary knowledge is not possible. Actually, grammatical mistakes lead to ungrammatical yet comprehendible utterances, whereas the inappropriate use of vocabulary affects the entire communication, which at times also changes the meaning of what is to be communicated. Vocabulary is one of the linguistic components which influences the level and quality of communication along with the learners' language prowess as well (Brown, Waring, & Donkaewbua, 2008; Meara & Jones, 1990; Moir & Nation, 2002; Schmitt, 1998; Schmitt, Wun-Ching, & Garras, 2011). Vocabulary is a vital tool for excelling at any language; it also helps in understanding written and spoken words. Thus, the more one practices the use of new words, the easier it becomes to communicate without falling short of words while speaking or writing. There is no doubt that learning vocabulary is not only about learning new words but also about knowing their functions and applicability in a variety of contexts. Ergo, the comprehension and usage of the English language depends on the complex activity of extracting, understanding and constructing messages by using appropriate lexical combinations at the right time and the right place. Learners need to understand the usage of the English language beyond its grammatical importance. Learning new words and using them in their personal lives and workplaces will allow learners to know what utterances are useful for communicating effectively.

Language experts and researchers also recognize the importance of vocabulary knowledge and its close connection to reading skills (Gardner, 2013; Nation, 2013). Language experts around the world are aware of the difficulties faced by English language learners while trying to improve their vocabulary. The most commonly mentioned challenge is the need to learn and use a large number of words, word families, and multi-word units. However, the learning situation for vocabulary varies in different contexts. Using motivated tactics for vocabulary acquisition is the greatest option because there aren't many possibilities for target-language input, output, and engagement when learning a foreign language. (Tseng & Schmitt, 2008).

In relation to language learning in both foreign and second language contexts, it has been discovered that a significant factor that causes learners to hesitate in engaging with reading and listening skills is the lack of vocabulary knowledge. Additionally, the challenge of vocabulary learning (and teaching) encompasses various noteworthy elements, such as word saliency, learning load, frequency of words, and learners' desired and necessary vocabulary (Grabe & Stoller, 2018).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Learning new vocabulary can be a difficult task for learners, despite some teachers believing it to be easy. The consequences for pupils with a small vocabulary are significant. Those who lack vocabulary or effective word-learning techniques often face challenges throughout their academic journey, resulting in a cycle of frustration and ongoing struggles

(Khany & Khosravian, 2014). Additionally, an individual's vocabulary level is seen as a key factor in accessing information, indicating their level of education (Beck & McKeown, 2007).

Foreign language learners often face the initial challenge of memorizing a large number of foreign words. The student must be highly motivated in order to develop autonomous vocabulary skills, which also require practice in a variety of areas. The strategies employed by students often vary depending on the individual, but within the classroom, teachers can demonstrate and reinforce these strategies to encourage independent vocabulary development. This approach empowers students to take control of their own learning. In recent years, there has been a growing interest in learning strategies aimed at enhancing students' vocabulary acquisition and progress (Van de Wege, 2018).

In order to facilitate the acquisition of new words and their meanings, learners should first be exposed to them and then be given opportunities to retrieve, recall, and use these words in various settings and contexts. This process, as stated by Cook (2013), is crucial for vocabulary development. However, it is important to acknowledge that vocabulary development encompasses more than just understanding word meanings. It also involves aspects such as pronunciation, spelling, grammar, connotations, morphological options, and semantic associations of words. With appropriate support and guidance, English learners can successfully enhance their vocabulary (Kayi-Aydar, 2018). In essence, learners require direction and guidance from their teachers to effectively manage their study time and optimize learning both inside and outside the classroom (Rogers, 2018).

Throughout adulthood, individuals continue to learn new words in their native language. This includes not only learning completely new words and their meanings but also learning new meanings for words that are already part of their vocabulary. It is worth noting that approximately 80% of English words are ambiguous (Rodd, Gaskell, & Marslen-Wilson, 2002), meaning they have multiple definitions. Additionally, previously unambiguous words can acquire new meanings over time. In everyday life, the process of learning new word meanings typically occurs incidentally (Batterink & Neville, 2011), where individuals infer the meaning from the context in which the word is used rather than intentionally memorizing it (Hulstijn, 2003). Incidental vocabulary learning refers to the unintentional learning of words and their meanings while engaged in another activity, such as reading for comprehension. On the other hand, intentional learning involves a deliberate effort to memorize words and their meanings. When it comes to incidental learning from reading, certain factors related to how new words and their meanings are presented in the text can influence subsequent learning and retention. One important factor is the number of times individuals are exposed to new vocabulary items. The discipline of learning a second language has conducted the majority of the research on the effect of exposure frequency on adults' accidental acquisition of vocabulary via reading (M. Horst, Cobb, & Meara, 1998; Pellicer-S´anchez& Schmitt, 2010; Rott, 1999; Waring & Takaki, 2003; Webb, 2007). Studies that look at adults' accidental word acquisition and its general meanings are, however, comparatively scarcer.

Learning different meanings for words that are already known may be simpler than learning completely new words since the focus of the learner is not split between grasping a fresh word and associating a meaning with it (Storkel & Maekawa, 2005; Storkel, Maekawa, & As-chenbrenner, 2013). On the other hand, some argue that acquiring new meanings for familiar words could be more challenging because of the conflict between the old and new definitions (Fang, Perfetti, & Stafura, 2016; Rodd et al., 2012).

Researchers have been intrigued by language learning strategies since the 1970s when they began examining the various strategies employed by successful language learners (e.g. Rubin, 1975). A significant shift in LLS studies took place between the 1980s and 1990s, focusing on categorizing these strategies (e.g. Chamot et al., 1999; Cohen, 1998; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990, 1996; Wenden, 1991; Wenden & Rubin, 1987). For example, O'Malley and Chamot (1990) identified three types of strategies: cognitive, metacognitive, and social/affective strategies. Similarly, Oxford (1990) introduced a traditional taxonomy that classifies LLS into six categories: cognitive, metacognitive, mnemonic, compensatory, affective, and social strategies.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A) Essays using New Words

Process – Students are given a set of 30 words which are not used in daily conversations. These words could include business or legal-related words, adjectives uncommonly used, etc. They are then explained the meaning of every word by the facilitator and told to write an essay using at least 25 of these words. This essay is purely fictional in nature.

Purpose - Learners should improve and expand their vocabulary to become fluent in English. Vocabulary in English-speaking and other countries has gained importance as the focus on Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has increased in recent decades (Russell, 1961). 63 years later, vocabulary is still considered a vital aspect of learning the English language. Richards (1976) emphasizes the importance of vocabulary by prioritizing it over grammar, which he feels is only important as a student, while vocabulary is learnt all your life. According to Coady and Huckin (1997), vocabulary is the heart of learning a

new language and is very important to the typical language learner. Scholars and researchers have differing opinions about the importance of vocabulary. Rivers (1981) stated that vocabulary needed the learner to learn it on his own. He said it couldn't be taught but could only be introduced, illustrated and incorporated through teaching assignments. In the past, vocabulary was ignored and more than often misused or neglected in literature (Judd, 1978; Nunan, 1991; Richards, 1976; Zimmerman, 1997). Most schools pay more attention to grammar and spelling instead of vocabulary (Fernandez et al., 2009). Emphasis and focus on learning new vocabulary began sometime in the late twentieth century, according to Schmitt (2000). In other words, teaching vocabulary has been the core of English language instruction over the past two decades (Ozgula & Abdulkadir, 2012; Morra & Camba, 2009). There is a difference between understanding a word and using it either in writing or while talking, according to McCarthy (1984), and knowing a word does not imply that it can be used in everyday life or in different situations and occasions. According to Ellis (1994), using learnt vocabulary requires cognitive learning. Ergo, understanding the meaning of words does not happen in isolation and is not enough because it requires a society and a sociocultural influence to use the words in daily conversations. "Literacy is a social activity," according to Scott et al. (2008), so language learners learn a language through social experiences by being part of a learning society.

B) Case Study

30 students each from Finance, Marketing and HRM specialization were selected for the study.

They were each given 25 words in 4 sessions belonging to 4 specializations, viz, Finance, Marketing, HRM and Science. A rounded average of the number of words retained by students of each specialization was taken into consideration for the study.

Table 1 represents data collected from 30 students. The first column represents the list of students who participated in the experiment. The second column represents the specialization of the respective student. The further columns represent several words retained by each student specialization-wise.

Table 2 represents the total count of the words retained by each student specialization-wise.
Table 3 represents the average count of the words retained by each student specialization-wise.
Table 4 represents the percentage of words written by each student specialization-wise.

TABLE 1

Student	Specialization	Finance Words	Marketing Words	HRM Words	Science Words
Student 1	Finance	21	18	19	18
Student 2	Marketing	20	20	16	18
Student 3	HRM	15	19	20	17
Student 4	Finance	22	18	18	17
Student 5	Marketing	19	20	16	17
Student 6	HRM	11	16	20	16
Student 7	Finance	23	17	17	18
Student 8	Marketing	20	21	15	18
Student 9	HRM	13	18	21	16
Student 10	Finance	24	18	19	17
Student 11	Marketing	19	20	19	19
Student 12	HRM	18	17	23	15
Student 13	Finance	24	17	19	18
Student 14	Marketing	18	20	18	17
Student 15	HRM	17	16	21	14
Student 16	Finance	24	16	18	18
Student 17	Marketing	20	20	18	18
Student 18	HRM	19	18	22	16
Student 19	Finance	21	20	19	18
Student 20	Marketing	17	21	17	18
Student 21	HRM	14	19	21	17
Student 22	Finance	22	21	18	19
Student 23	Marketing	16	20	18	17
Student 24	HRM	15	17	21	15
Student 25	Finance	23	18	17	17
Student 26	Marketing	19	22	19	17
Student 27	HRM	15	18	20	16
Student 28	Finance	23	19	19	18
Student 29	Marketing	18	22	13	18
Student 30	HRM	16	17	19	16

TABLE 2

Word Retention	Finance Students (10)	Marketing Students (10)	HRM Students (10)
Finance Words	227	186	153
Marketing Words	182	206	175
HRM Words	183	169	208
Science Words	178	177	158

TABLE 3

Word Retention	Finance Students (10)	Marketing Students (10)	HRM Students (10)
Finance Words	22.7	18.6	15.3
Marketing Words	18.2	20.6	17.5
HRM Words	18.3	16.9	20.8
Science Words	17.8	17.7	15.8

TABLE 4

Word Retention	Finance Students (10)	Marketing Students (10)	HRM Students (10)
Finance Words	90.8	74.4	61.2
Marketing Words	72.8	82.4	70
HRM Words	73.2	67.6	83.2
Science Words	71.2	70.8	63.2

C) Results

It is observed that Students belonging to each specialization remember more words belonging to their respective specialization. However, considering other specializations, they remember less number of words. It can be interpreted that since they learn and hear more words from their respective specialization when given specific words belonging to their specialization, they can retain those words faster and more easily compared to words belonging to other specialization. However, it can also be interpreted that specialization belongs to their domain, management; in this case, the number of words retained specific to the domain is higher compared to other domains, which is science.

IV. CONCLUSION

Though students are interested in learning new words, the words retained by them purely depend upon the specialization they belong to. This indicates that words retained by the students are higher in their respective specializations. One reason could be that they read those words more frequently or they find these words more interesting and hence, the remembrance of these words is higher. The number of words retained other than the student's specialization indicates that the students are interested in learning new words. If these words are reproduced regularly in various ways then the retention might increase of these words.

Further studies can study country-wise retention of words by the students and the effect of retention of students belonging to various cultures. Though the study focuses on only 3 specializations, further study can explore and include various other specializations. Also, further study can focus on considering various age groups of the students.

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