

Activity Based Vocabulary Teaching and learning of Collocation in General English Classroom

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Abstract

This research was performed in Arts and science college of Indian ESL learners to explore the impact of activity based vocabulary teaching and learning of collocation in general English classroom. First year B.Com general English students were chosen as a subject. An experimental method was conducted; forty students have been taken as the subject. They were subjected to therapy in which the use of Collocation approach instructed vocabulary selection through miming. The findings of the post-test acquired through the SPSS software showed at the end of instructions find that students can retain the words what they learned before. The findings of a delayed post-test after sometime disclosed that the long-term impact of the mind mapping approach was considerably effective in retaining the vocabulary by ESL learners in teaching this activity. One significant pedagogical implication of this research is that a more focused collocation approach of vocabulary can be very efficient at the general English classroom of ESL learners.

Key Words: ESL Learners, Collocation, Vocabulary Strategy, Task Based Language Teaching TBLL.

Introduction

In India, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English as a Second Language (ESL) is taught in General English class room for a limited period of time each week with purposes.

Students are exposed to plenty of words and grammatical rules. Language teachers have been teaching vocabulary as a core component of language proficiency by means of traditional methods such as repetition, notebook with list of vocabulary, dictionaries, synonyms, antonyms, etc. Learning words and how to use and how to retain them is quite challenging and students of General English cannot achieve their potential without retain their vocabulary. There are many methods of vocabulary instruction exist in the current day context of vocabulary acquisition. However, how well students can retain the new words they have encountered and apply them in the day to day communication is important. This is where the concept of retention comes into play. Understanding how students retain and then use new words is critical for teachers to recognize and then apply in student learning tasks. The level at which students understand, recall, and store words is an essential piece of teacher knowledge. So the researcher identifies the activity collocation.

Task based language learning (TBLL)

One of the most effective ways of learning a language is participating in a context where the target language is used. Producing the target language by participating in activities designed with an objective to learn and effectively use target language is the primary aim of TBLL. The 'tasks' could be further defined as any job undertaken by somebody for himself or for other people. It can be buying a ticket, reserving a seat in the theatre and similar other jobs anybody does in his or her everyday life, personally or professionally. Watching a play and later enacting it is an example of a pedagogical task. Practicing or doing variety of tasks will enhance language competence of the learners. Language is practiced for learning communication and not for the sake of the language.

Tasks can be done individually, in pair or as a group activity. Learners have to invent, find out or guess the meaning and they cannot depend on meanings provided by others. The tasks which are given to the learners should be authentic and similar to real life situations. In the context of TBLL, prominence should be given not only to the successful completion of the task but also to the language enhancement of the learners.

Vocabulary teaching and learning in Task-based language learning (TBLL)

Vocabulary is one of the core components of language proficiency and contributes to how well learners speak, listen, read, and write (Richards & Renandya, 2002). The teaching of specific or field-specific vocabulary to learners has been a concern throughout the history of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and language teaching. Vocabulary, in this context, could be classified into two types (Sarani & Farzaneh, 2012):

- i. The vocabulary that is used in general language but has a higher frequency of occurrence in specific and technical description and discussion.
- ii. The vocabulary that has specialized and restricted meanings in certain disciplines and which may vary in meaning across disciplines.

According to Ellis and Beaton (1993) knowledge of a word involves various components such as its spelling, phonological representation, word class, morphological or syntactic features, basic meaning, derived meaning, to mention some. Most of the studies on vocabulary acquisition focus on understanding the basic meaning of the words. This is not adequate as vocabulary acquisition focuses not only understanding the basic meaning of words but beyond that. According to Fuente (2006), “there is a receptive-productive continuum involved in learning a word, and receptive processing (for comprehension) and productive processing (for production) are said to be two different types of cognitive processes (the first meaning-focused, the second form-focused.” TBLT combines communicative language use with a focus on language form. Thus, this approach is likely to provide learners with opportunities to connect old knowledge to other learning tasks in a communicative way (Ellis, 2009).

These methods have had many positive impact on the learner both generally language learning and acquiring vocabulary in specific. Vocabulary acquisition plays a vital role in enabling learners to effectively communicate. Considering vocabulary as an important element in learning a language, David Wilkins, a linguist and Professor Emeritus of *Linguistics* at the University of Reading, remarked that “without grammar little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed.” Undeniably, learners have to use words in order to express themselves effectively.

Teachers have been using many methods to help learners acquire vocabulary. However, there was a major change in teaching English in the beginning of 1970s. The focus turned from the Direct Method and Audiolingualism to the Communicative Approach which emphasized the

importance of teaching vocabulary. Students were exposed to diverse vocabulary and speaking activities. Many words began being introduced during such courses and students were encouraged to express themselves as much as possible.

According to Meara (1996), vocabulary, for the L2 learners, is a problem that hinders the development of communication skills. This idea by Meara reflects the fact that the open-endedness of a vocabulary system is perceived to be a cause of difficulty by learners. As a result, language teachers and applied linguists now generally recognise the importance of vocabulary learning and are exploring ways of promoting it more effectively amidst L2 learners.

Literature Review

Joe (1995) argued that the retention of unfamiliar words was significantly facilitated when students engaged in a text-based task that demanded a higher level of generativity. Similarly, Hulstijn and Laufer (2001) demonstrated that EFL students who participated in a composition task could retain target words better than those engaged in a reading comprehension or fill-in task, which suggests that students who were involved in higher levels of vocabulary production-processing remembered target words better than those who were not. Plass, Chun, Mayer, and Leutner (1998) stated that students remembered unknown words better when provided with both pictorial and written annotations than when provided with only one kind or no annotation.

According to Rod Ellis (2003), a task is like a real work activity, which involves learners in productive oral and written skills like any other language learning process. However, students should acquire grammatical knowledge, while being involved in a task.

Research Design:

- Identifying the students for the experiment
- Identifying the problems in retaining words based on the responses of the students
- Designing and administering activity to address the identified problems based on retention
- Graphically representing and analyzing the performance of the students in activity

Subjects and Instruments:

This study was carried out in an autonomous college in the central part of Tamil Nadu, India. This is an Arts and Science college where English is being taught as second language. The English course which is offered at the first four semesters of a six-semester under graduate degree programme focuses on four basic language skills namely Listening, Speaking, Reading and Listening (LSRW). For the purpose of this research work, 40 students of I year B.Com programme were used as subjects. The researcher was the course instructor of the class thus; the accuracy and validation of the study were ensured.

The intervention lasted for 25 sessions (55 minutes each). The number of students in the class was 40. During the experiment, students were administered with task based activity.

In this study, focuses with task based vocabulary teaching learning of collocation activity for retention strategies that help students retain words for a longer period of time or forever here, the researcher has adopted collocation activity to help students to retain the learnt vocabularies. Activity focuses on students mimic a target word activity is designed based on the words and contexts in the textbook prescribed to the students. Task based vocabulary teaching and learning of collocation.

Collocations

Collocations are words that co-occur and express specific meanings in the context where they are used. For this co-occurrence, there are not syntactic or semantic rules to apply. According to Moreno (2009), the word combinations to form collocations can be governed by three main approaches. Firstly, collocations where the combinations of words habitually occur together regardless of any grammatical structure; secondly, words formed as collocation to emphasise on the meanings they convey and thirdly, the combination of first and second. The primary objective of using collocations in daily communication is to sound natural in terms of using English language. Consistently using collocation helps students to understand their use and also helps them in retaining some of the commonly used collocations. In this activity students were grouped, a person came and mimic the word given by the researcher, group members tried to find the word then they found the possible collocation in that particular word. The following is a sample of this activity:

Table: 1 Collocation Activity target words

Circuit	Opportunity	Chain
short circuit	Economic opportunity	Broken chain
closed circuit	Employment opportunity	Chain reaction
integrated circuit	Enormous opportunity	Chain migration
circuit board	Equality of opportunity	Chain of command
circuit breaker	Excellent opportunity	Chain of custody
circuit training	Golden opportunity	Complex chain
circuit judge	Historic opportunity	Endless chain

Fill in the blanks using appropriate words given in the box:

Example:

A **short circuit** is a situation in which a faulty connection or damaged wire causes electricity to travel along the wrong route and damage an electrical device.

As a result, when there is a **short circuit**, sparks fly.

Serial, chain, big,
 truth, fact, confession,
 chance, opportunity, offer
 Finishing, conclusion, stop

1. The old man was a _____ smoker, so few people weren't surprised when he died of oral cancer.
2. The robber denied it at first but eventually we were able to beat a _____ out of him.
3. Don't miss this golden _____. If you miss it, you will regret for it later.
4. When Magesh and Mohan started fighting, it brought the meeting to an abrupt _____.

Classification of vocabulary teaching and learning

Collocations		
No. of respondents	Cumilati ve scores	Percent
3	15	7.5
7	42	17.5
9	63	22.5
15	120	37.5
5	45	12.5
1	10	2.5
40	295	100
	36.875	

Figure: 1 Collocation activity score

The following are the major finding of this study:

- In the vocabulary acquisition sessions, the focus is on the learning of new vocabulary and not on the retention of those words. Therefore, the results of this study have mention task based vocabulary teaching and learning helped the learners to regain words.
- The incorporation of this kind of vocabulary based activity is effective and students willingly participate when they are in the form of activities.
- In this study, collocation activity designed by the researcher. The activity focuses on helping students retain the words they come across in the textbook. This activity is designed to facilitate students to work individually and also in groups. Based on the analysis it is evident that student participation and outcome are effective in collocation activity.

Conclusion:

Forty ESL students drawn from the 1st year B.Com department were administered with a questionnaire based on their information about vocabulary teaching and learning. Based on the responses of the students, problem in terms of retention were identified. To cater to the problem identified, task based vocabulary teaching and learning activity was designed for the students to

participate. The outcomes and results of the students were tabulated and analyzed. It was identified that this collocation activity was effective in terms of developing their retention and also, vocabulary learning skills.

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