

Towards the Description of Techniques in Teaching L2 Vocabulary

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Abstract

The acquisition of Vocabulary occupies a very prominent place in acquiring the knowledge of foreign language because in L2 context, learners and teachers give much consideration to the meanings of new words. During the process of learning and teaching L2, vocabulary is of vital importance. English is widespread language and it constantly receives new words from the other languages of world due to its universality. So, the handling of huge amount of words becomes problematic for L2 learners. They face difficulties in handling the words as well as their interpretation from the text. No doubt, vocabulary cannot be acquired without interpretation. So, vocabulary and interpretation are interlinked to each other. Pupils having sound vocabulary easily understand the challenging and unacquainted concepts but the learners with poor vocabulary cannot have the ability to understand the concepts (Baumann, Kame'enui, & Ash, 2003). Becker (1977) is of the opinion that low performance of pupils in education is due to the poor vocabulary. Subsequently, for getting proficiency over L2, learners should possess the sound knowledge of huge amount of vocabulary. Therefore, for enhancing the vocabulary, effective strategies should be introduced. They should motivate dynamic learning, raise the interests of the students for learning new words connecting them with the contextual knowledge and provide them background information. The conducted research is an attempt to reveal the value of vocabulary for L2 learners and examine the activities which are useful for this purpose.

Keywords: vocabulary, problematic, interpretation, contextual knowledge

1. Introduction

Cameron (2001) illustrates that in the acquisition of language, the role of Vocabulary is significant for the learners. Harmon, Wood, & Keser, (2009) as well as Linse and Nunan (2005) elaborate that the proficiency over language is enhanced by the increase of the vocabulary. It is argued that to improve the size of vocabulary is the core element for the progress of language.

While, this important aspect of language has not been given importance in the past but with the passage of time, it has captured the interest of

investigators and scholars and Carter, McCarthy, Channell, and McCarthy (1988), Nation (1990), Arnaud and Bejoint (1992), Huckin, Haynes and Coady (1995), Coady and Huckin (1997), Schmitt (1997, 2000) Read (1997) and many others have conducted studies regarding vocabulary. It is investigated that the acquisition of language is the most perceptive challenging task on the part of the learners.

Several students learn the knowledge of grammar when they are nine or ten years old. However, learners keep on acquiring the new vocables during the whole span of life (Schmitt, 2000). According to (Nagy 2005), the expansion and explanation of vocabulary is a phenomenon which expands throughout a life cycle. People cannot communicate with other effectively without the intervention of vocabulary irrespective of the fact

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that they have command over the knowledge of grammar or other properties of language. The huge amount of core interaction can be conveyed with the help of Vocabulary and the role of other aspects of language is little in this process (Schmitt, 2000). Vocabulary may possess the major part of the meaning of language and is a challenging task for the pupils (Fan, 2003). The overall language skills like listening, speaking, reading, and writing is the production of vocabulary. That is why, it is called the center of overall skills of language.

Decarrico (2001) describes that vocabulary proficiency holds a major place among the elements needed to get proficiency in communication. The notion has also been shaped by the perception of vocabulary. The link between vocabulary and conception is practically authenticated. Stahl (1986) is of the opinion that the knowledge of pupils' vocabulary in kindergarten is associated with reading conception at the greater elementary level. Vocabulary is regarded as a persuasive aspect for reading achievement (Biemiller, 2003).

The nature and impact of English as a global language

Being a universal language, English contains a huge amount of vocabulary. Vocabulary of English is enriched with vividness, enormity, and intricacy. It is estimated that the overall amount of the vocabularies of English are almost more than 2 million and they belong to almost over 54,000 word families (Schmitt, 2000). And an increase is keeping on in the amount of vocabularies and the word groups with the alarming speed. Stahl (1986) opines in this regard that because of its mingled nature, English improves its vocabulary by getting words from other informants as other languages, vernacular, and compounding. It seems very hard task for native and non-native persons of English to get the knowledge of the whole vocabulary of English. Nevertheless, the strength of students acquiring the knowledge of English vocabulary is remarkable rather than the learners of other languages. Every learner has a different range of vocabulary. In this regard, Baumann et al. (2003) explain that adult normally possesses nearly 17,000 base words. And Schmitt (2000) adds that the native speakers at graduate level contain nearly 20,000-word families.

Apart from the huge amount of vocabulary which shocks the students, learners also encounter with the dilemma that is the quality of vocabulary. It means that quantity and quality both are issues faced by L2 learners in acquiring the knowledge of

English. Schmitt (2000) expresses his views that the vocabulary of English is replete with shades and delicate traits. Several vocabularies reveal the common meaning, but a great number of words share a general meaning but have unique and fine variations. For instance, the words attached to "throw" can consist of "toss," "cast," "hurl," "fling," "sling," "pitch," "dash," "propel," and "project," etc. The prolonged catalog cannot be completed and is kept on increasing.

2. Literature Review

For L2 speakers, the acquisition of vocabulary is generally called the crucial element because lack of vocabulary creates hindrance in the process of communication successfully. Highlighting the significance of vocabulary acquisition, Schmitt (2000) is of the opinion that the knowledge of lexis is essential for the purpose of gaining mastery in communication and for attaining the knowledge of L2. Nation (2001) portrays the association between the understanding of vocabulary and language practice being supportive: understanding of vocabulary helps us to employ the language and, on the other hand, the utilization of language takes to the expansion in the knowledge of vocabulary. Every day, the value of vocabulary is displayed during the activities in educational institutions and during activities outside of the educational institutions. The learners possessing strong power of getting knowledge learn appropriate vocabulary in the environment of educational institutions.

The importance of vocabulary has been acknowledged by Laufer and Nation (1999), Maximo (2000), Read (2000), Gu (2003), Marion (2008) and Nation (2011) and many other researchers. They argue that attaining the knowledge of vocabulary holds a prominent place in the effective utilization of L2 and performs a key task to make the written and spoken skills perfect. According to Nation (2011) and Rivers and Nunan (1991), in the process of achieving the knowledge of English as a second and foreign language, vocabulary occupies a prominent status in overall skills of language. Additionally, they maintain that the achievement of sufficient vocabulary requires to use L2 skillfully as with insufficient knowledge, learners find themselves impotent to apply the structure and roles which are necessary to communicate clearly. The previous research works show that the L2 learners are strongly dependent on the knowledge of vocabulary and in case of shortage of vocabulary, they encounter challenges and to tackle with the

challenges is the major impediment in the acquisition of L2 (Huckin, 1995).

During the process of construction, having a meaning or idea we want to convey needed a collection of vocables from which words are chosen for this purpose. While travelling, the learners need not to take grammatical textbooks, they take with them dictionaries (Krashen, as cited in Lewis, 1993, p25). It is argued that vocabulary holds a prominent place in the acquisition of L2. It is considered the one among the most significant elements for language learning if not called the most significant element and the syllabus of L2 should highlight this element. Wilkins (1972) maintains that if learners have no sufficient vocabulary to express their ideas, for them, the ability of making grammatically correct sentences is not so much beneficial. He further argues that we express a little bit having no grammar but without the knowledge of vocabulary, we express nothing. So, it can be said that no grammar means less communication, but no vocabulary means no communication at all.

Richards (1980) and Krashen (1989), as cited in Maximo (2000) lay stress on the learning of vocabulary due to several causes. One reason is that sufficient vocabulary is obviously crucial for getting proficiency over L2 and the second reason is that the language learners know that they need to take dictionaries instead of grammar textbooks and it is frequently stated that insufficient vocabulary is a challenging task. From another point of view, it is said that just vocabulary is the major cause of concerns confronted by L2 speakers (Meara, 1980). One more cause is that for the acquisition of language, vocabulary has no directions for learners to act upon. It can be maintained that it remains unclear for the students in learning procedure of vocabulary which rules are applied, and initially which units of vocabulary are important to acquire. L2 speakers have to handle the vocabulary from examination point of view in spite of the fact, they meet impediments in learning vocabulary because conventionally it is among one of the constituents of language assessed during the test of language (Schmitt, 1999). Moreover, for numerous learners, the attainment of L2 is basically a subject of acquiring vocabulary and because of this reason, they pay more attention and devote much time in cramming the long lists of L2 vocabulary and depend upon bilingual dictionary as a fundamental tool for communication. By keeping in view, the significance of vocabulary, L2 instructors, researchers and linguists are giving attention to this important

component of language and endeavoring to find out new techniques and methods for its successful development.

The Definition of Vocabulary

Vocabulary is described as for the purpose of successful communication; words must be known. words in spoken are called expressive vocabulary and words in listening are receptive vocabulary (Neuman & Dwyer, 2009). vocabulary is described by Hornby (1995) as the overall amount of words in a language and it is a list of words with their meanings. According to Ur (1998), Vocabulary more or less is the words taught in the foreign language. Nevertheless, vocabulary does not consist of one word, but it is made up of more than one words as football, sister -in-law and blackboard etc. are made up more than one word but present a sole meaning.

According to Burns (1972), a collection of words exploited by learner, group or occupation is called vocabulary. Zimmerman mentions in Coady and Huckin (1998) that vocabulary is the core unit of language and has a fundamental place in the learning procedure of language. Furthermore, Diamond and Gutlohn (2006) reveal that the knowledge of vocabulary means the understanding of words and their meanings. So, it is argued that the overall amount of words is called vocabulary required to express ideas. Due to this reason, for L2 learners, it becomes imperative to acquire the knowledge of vocabulary.

Kinds of Vocabulary

Vocabulary is classified into two kinds; one is called active and second is called passive. Harmer (1991) draws a distinction between two kinds of vocabulary. In first kind of vocabulary, learners are supposed to be capable of exploiting learnt vocabulary and second category mentions the words which will be identified by the learners when they face them but they will be unable to utter them. Hatch and Brown (1995) cite Haycraft by explaining that there are two types of vocabulary, one is called receptive vocabulary and other is called productive vocabulary.

Receptive Vocabulary

Receptive vocabulary belongs to the category where the speakers understand and identify the words exploited in context, however these are not generated by them. The speakers identify these words when they come across them while reading but are unable to employ them in written or spoken forms (Stuart Webb, 2009).

Productive Vocabulary

Productive vocabulary refers to the words which are inferred and pronounced by speakers accurately and they exploit them productively in speech and written. It means that this category enables the learners to gain the ability to utter or write appropriately at the suitable time. Consequently, productive vocabulary is regarded as an active procedure as the speakers can generate words to communicate with others (Stuart Webb, 2005).

Vocabulary Mastery

Owing to the importance of vocabulary, it becomes imperative for L2 learners to have command over English vocabulary. To communicate with others and convey thoughts, sound knowledge of vocabulary is required. With the help of vocabulary, we comprehend the ideas and messages of others. Webster (1992) defines what is meant by mastery. He says that it means the power of a master: in dominion, has priority and supremacy in a competition. He further says that it possesses excellent skill and, in this skill, the master of a text remarks. Whilst, For Hornby (1995), mastery is the comprehensive understanding or full technique. So, in the light of above-mentioned description, it can be said that comprehensive understanding or technique is called mastery because on account of mastery, a person becomes the master of specific field.

Vocabulary mastery describes the huge ability in managing words of a language. The personal accomplishment and ownership is called vocabulary mastery (Rivers, 1989). By keeping in mind this cause, the persons themselves are responsible to improve their knowledge. The achievement to expand the vocabulary mastery demands that the learners should have enthusiasm and curiosity to learn new words of a language. So, it can be argued that vocabulary mastery is the huge technique of a person how he/she exploits the vocables of a language and this mastery is achieved because of his/ her attention and motive. No doubt, in improving the overall skills of language, the proficiency over vocabulary is essential and it is said that no language can be learnt without vocabulary mastery as it occupies the central position among the constituents required for the acquisition of a language.

The Techniques in Teaching Vocabulary

Generally, many methods are used for the pedagogy of English vocabulary. The instructors of L2 need to keep in mind some points while teaching new words or units of lexis to the learners. This

implies that L2 instructors wish that their learners do not forget them. So, the learners can remember them by learning, doing exercises and by revising. In this way, new words will be stored in their memory and cannot be forgotten. This technique will enable the learners to remember learnt vocabulary. There are several elements that play their role when the instructors apply the methods for this purpose as subject matter, accessibility of time, and its significance for the students (Takač, 2008). On account of these factors, the educator has a few causes in utilizing specific practices for the presentation of lexical items. While displaying designed words, he/ she generally uses the mixture of many techniques rather than one method. Moreover, Pinter (2006) is of the opinion that instructors should present prepared vocabulary in a feasible way. Brewster, Ellis, and Girard (1992) define the following effective methods for the pedagogy of L2 vocabulary.

Making Use of Objects

Realia, visual aids, and presentation are used in this technique. By using these objects, students can learn vocabulary successfully as human memory interprets things easily by seeing actual items and pictures and visual methods become helpful in providing them clues to recollect the vocables (Takač, 2008). According to Gairns & Redman (1986), the method of using actual items utilized accurately proves very helpful for the students at the initial level during the process of teaching them material nouns. The students acquire the knowledge of the particular words easily if they are shown the actual items related the particular words which they are going to learn. They can easily learn the words by means of visualization. The objects presented in and outside of the classrooms may be employed for this purpose.

Drawing

The instructors teach them vocabulary by drawing objects on the white or blackboards. Flash cards are used for this purpose. The flash cards are not wasted in case if they are in form of cards and wrapped with plastics. The instructors can use them over and over in a variety of situation according to the subject matter. The beginners will be able to comprehend and get the knowledge of the basic points learnt inside the class.

Employing Images and Pictures

For connecting the learner's previous knowledge to a new narrative or incident, picture holds the key position in this regard. Pictures help them in the process of learning vocabulary by connecting their

earlier awareness to a new specific incident. Several words are taught or presented with the help of images or pictures. They make the ambiguous meaning unambiguous. They pave the way in clearing the meaning of difficult words and in this way, they are easy to remember and learn. The L2 instructors should develop the habit to use this technique frequently and positively. Flashcards, wall charts, magazine pictures, board drawings, stick figures and photographs etc. are included in the list of pictures or images. For the pedagogy of L2 vocabulary, pictures or images can be taken from different resources. Newspapers and magazines contain many appealing pictures. They can be used and proved effective for this purpose. Currently, the learners' books regarding vocabulary have a plenty of pictures which highlight the meaning and concept of the particular vocables. The teachers can utilize their vocabulary and textbooks by keeping in view this purpose.

Enumeration

A complete set of objects in which all objects are listed in order is called enumeration. This skill is useful when instructor feels difficulty in explaining a word in a visual manner. For example, in case of saying 'clothes' the instructors can describe it by counting or listing numerous articles. The teacher can make a list of clothes such as 'a shirt', 'jeans' and 'a coat' etc. and then can explain that all these are clothes. In this way, the learners will grasp the meaning of word 'clothes'. This skill can be applied in teaching the vocabulary of vegetables and furniture (Harmer 1991).

Eliciting

It is also useful skill for teaching vocabulary. In this method, the learners are provided a list of vocables to memorize.

Translation

This technique is unable in generating a necessity or motive of pupils to cogitate about the meaning of the word (Cameron, 2001), but in certain settings, the technique proves beneficial for the L2 instructors as to handle the incidental vocabulary (Thorburry, 2002), testing pupils' ability, and indicating resemblances or disparities between L1 and L2, when there are chances of making mistakes (Takač, 2008). It is observed that every language has words which need translation and this technique can be fruitful in saving time to fulfill this purpose.

Drilling

It is utilized to make students acquainted with the word type particularly to how it looks. According to Thorburry (2002), for the purpose of making students aware with the word, drilling should have clarity and should be organic. Drilling holds the prominent place in learning procedure of L2 vocabulary as it is needed for pupils to speak the word to themselves as they memorize it for recalling the words from memory (Ellis & Beaton, 1993, Read, 2000).

Spelling the Word

Reed (2012) is of the opinion that the basic method of spelling is in fact to learn the vocables. The spelling of the words demands to be deemed as spelling shapes of English words is not every time understood by the pronunciation.

3. Conclusion

The conducted research reveals the significance of vocabulary in the acquisition of L2. No language is acquired without the knowledge of vocabulary as it is considered the heart of a language (Akhter S, Kumar, & Qureshi, 2020). In order to attain the knowledge of English, the sound knowledge of vocabulary is required. To learn English language is the need of the day as it has become international language (Akhter, 2020). In past, no attention was given for vocabulary but now this aspect of L2 has gained attention and popularity. Almost all researchers do agree that the understanding of lexical units holds a core position for attaining competency in communication and attaining mastery over L2. Insufficient vocabulary creates hurdles in acquiring the knowledge of English. If learners lack sound vocabulary, they cannot get command overall skills of English and encounter problems while producing ideas. In this way, they are unable to communicate with others in English properly.

The conducted study is an endeavor in this regard. It highlights the position of English vocabulary and clarifies the methods can be exploited in teaching vocabulary. These techniques will be highly beneficial for teachers to teach and for learners to learn English vocabulary. But it is necessary to mention that learning of vocabulary may be influenced by various factors like the age of students, level of education, social environment, and gender etc. Therefore, L2 instructors should be aware of all these factors while introducing methods to learn vocabulary.

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