

Integrating Vocabulary Teaching to Promote Writing in EFL Contexts

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إدماج تدريس المفردات في تعليم الإنشاء الكتابي لدى متعلمي اللغة الانجليزية كلغة اجنبية

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المدرسة العليا للاساتذة بالاغواط

تعتبر المفردات في اللغات عموما ترجمانا للأفكار وقوالب للرؤى. إلا أن طرائق وسبل تدريس واكتساب هاته الألفاظ ، خاصة المتخصصة منها، لها اهمية خاصة وسبل محددة لأن المتعلم في هذا السياق اللغوي له عائقين : الأول هو اللغة كونها اجنبية في مقام اول ، والثاني الكتابة المتخصصة بحكم التخصص المدرس اصلا ، مما يجعل المتعلم في رحلة عديدة المصاعب لا يذللها الا الارادة والرغبة الجامحة في التحصيل اللغوي عبر القراءة مثلا . فمن خلال تجربة ميدانية مع طلبة السنة الثالثة فرع التسويق بقسم الاقتصاد بجامعة عمار ثلجي بالاغواط خلال الموسم 2016/2015 وعن طريق دراسة وصفية اعتمدت الاستبيان طريقة للتقصي والبحث تبين أن اغلبية المدرسين 75 % والمتعلمين 90 % يؤمنون باهمية اكتساب الالفاظ والمفردات اللغوية الانجليزية خصوصا منها المتخصصة – الانجليزية لاغراض خاصة- ويعتبرونها ضرورية لاي تواصل كتابي على وجه الخصوص .

Introduction

Throughout this study we will be assuming that EFL / ESP marketing learners will be able to bypass their writing imperfections, if we consider seriously the inclusion of vocabulary (core/academic) tasks during the teaching of the writing skill, i.e., the learning/ teaching process. In addition, this is an attempt to diagnose learners' awareness about "reading" as being an essential source of accumulating new lexis that is supposed to be a reliable support towards grasping the real meaning the learners intend to express through their written communication techniques.

In order to back up our basic assumptions, we have first chosen a population that includes learners of the third year LMD marketing at Laghouat University, to whom we have addressed “the learners’ questionnaire, in addition to their English language teachers.

This study then, seeks to describe, analyze and discuss the problems S-5/S-6 (third year LMD for the academic year 2015/2016) marketing students have or face while writing in English through communication techniques: reports, e-mails...etc.

Main Hypothesis:

1-Due to the lack of business core/academic vocabulary, S-5/S-6 marketing students cannot communicate effectively through written communication techniques.

Main Research Question:

1-To what extent does vocabulary consist a challenging obstacle in achieving sound writing?

1. Approaches to Teaching Vocabulary

Since vocabulary is agreed upon by most practitioners and theorists to be an essential part of every language program, and even learners themselves often acknowledge its importance and indicate that vocabulary acquisition is the most troublesome aspect of learning English (Meara, 1980). About this point , Richards. J.C (1976:84) suggests:" *A major feature of a second language program should be a component of massive vocabulary expansion*".

EFL teachers often have a tendency to teach grammatical structures more than helping their learners acquire enough vocabulary, this is justified by the long-term memorization of those grammatical rules .However when those learners need to communicate they don't have sufficient words to use " *Their vocabulary is painfully inadequate*" (Feeny,1976:485).

Several approaches and strategies have been created and purified so as to find an efficient short-cut to make EFL learners in particular acquire the necessary lexical items they use in their written communication. Among the most current approaches to teaching vocabulary there is: The Incidental Approach and The Direct Approach.

1.1 The Incidental Approach

The term 'incidental' refers to the idea that acquiring vocabulary is not the fundamental pedagogical concern and thus the learned vocabulary is a mere byproduct of the main activity. Krashen (1989) says:

Some specialized vocabulary (e.g. scientific nomenclature, business terminology..etc.) may need to be taught directly, but the majority of words acquired incidentally during exposure to comprehensible input through reading.

This approach refers to the fact that L1 vocabulary can be taught in a large amount in relatively short time, and also incidental learning is responsible for the majority of L2 vocabulary acquisition after the first two or three thousand most frequent words are learned (Huckin & Coady, 1999). There is also a number of researchers who believe that this learning strategy is more practical than presenting a large number of vocabulary directly through instruction. For instance Huckin and Coady (ibid:182) state three benefits for this vocabulary learning strategy:

- 1- It is contextualized
- 2- It is pedagogically efficient
- 3- It is individualized and learner-based.

Nagy W (1997 in Schmitt N, 2000) thinks that incidental learning in an L2 is more challenging than in the L1, though he maintains that incidental learning is the only way for L2 learners to develop efficiently large vocabularies. That means incidental learning helps learners acquire new vocabulary simultaneously when using authentic texts to enhance

reading skills, providing that tasks should be of a good quality rather than focusing on "quantity" of exposure .

It is then widely acknowledged by researchers that incidental learning is responsible for the majority of L2 vocabulary acquisition after the first two or three thousand most frequent words are learned (Huckin and Coady, 1999).

Despite the fact that this approach may be ideal in some educational contexts , however it may also be inefficient in some other contexts. For EFL learners , whose time is limited and opportunities for the language exposure are not possible, there are certain drawbacks that , in one way or another, may hamper the adequacy of good vocabulary acquisition. Huckin and Coady (ibid :189) mention: "*Guessing from context has serious limitations*", in other words being able to guess from context requires certain linguistic skills . This is because there are words which are not easily inferred from context especially some tricky lexical items (including multi-word items) when compared to those that are easy to infer from context. So, learners have to adopt effective reading strategies added to the clarity of the context. Bearing this in mind , a direct learning may possibly provide a better chance for presenting L2 vocabulary.

1.2 Direct Instruction Approach

The other paramount approach often credited for the acquisition of the most common words for L2 learners is known as : 'direct' or ' intentional ' learning. Nation (2001) shows the rank this approach assumes: "*the intentional teaching of a target word using techniques focusing on either the word's meaning or use*". In this approach teachers are supposed to deliberately direct vocabulary learning. Schmitt (2000) for instance, who is another advocate for this doctrine clarifies : "*The learning of basic words cannot be left to chance , but should be taught as quickly as possible, because they open the door to further learning*" ,as he clarifies his attitude to this approach saying that: "*The reliance on incidental learning must be reexamined as direct learning may provide the best chance for L2 vocabulary acquisition*".

This view is again supported by Nation (2008) saying that the 2,000 most frequent words should be taught to learners as an important initial step in instruction. According to Nation also (2001) , this also includes vocabulary from the Academic Word List (AWL) for those learners planning on continuing with further academic study.

This direct learning approach involves some useful strategies for L2 learners, first: the memorization of bilingual word lists, which according to O'Malley & Chamot (1990)"...has

shown to be effective for some learners ". On the contrary, it is considered quite superficial. Meara (2009,p.18) criticizes such an approach as it *"assumes that vocabulary items are discrete, and ignores the networks of semantic relations that exist between words"*

Another direct vocabulary retention technique that has been subject to investigation is the Key Word method (Atkinson ,1975) , which according to Schmitt (2000) *" requires deeper processing than rote memorization or repeated note-taking"*. It requires an intermediary L1 word (the keyword) that sounds like the new L2 word. The learner is then supposed to conjure up an image of the key word and the new L2 word together.

Wang , Thomas ,& Ouellette (1992) evaluated this method saying:" *The Key Word method has been proven to increase learning speed and retention of second language vocabulary* ", despite this , Meara (1980) asks for a careful attention against the blind acceptance of the key word technique , claiming that it is not enough to explain L2 vocabulary acquisition .

In shortage, both incidental and direct instruction approaches have presented uncountable positive contributions to L1/L2 vocabulary acquisition , but according to Laufer and Hulstijn (2001) incidental learning is the only method that holds up the empirical investigation , for the other techniques (e.g. keyword, list memorization) are not guaranteed to be drawn upon for recall during vocabulary tests. However, like incidental learning, direct learning methods seem to stand up well to experimental scrutiny.

3. EFL/ESP Vocabulary Acquisition

(The lexically-based Writing Approach)

Firstly , the term 'vocabulary' as defined by The Oxford Advanced Learner's Encyclopedic Dictionary (1998) as the :*" total number of words that make up a language."* In other words , this total size consists the raw material of any language, as we find Penny Ur (2007:60) stating:" *Vocabulary can be defined , roughly, as the words we teach in the foreign language* "in this definition , another notion is added referring to *"foreign"* as if only the foreign language vocabulary that needs to be taught, and those words of the mother tongue or national language needn't, as long as there's always the feature of the spontaneous exposure to its words. David Wilkins (in Thorn bury Scott 2008:113) says :*" Without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed"*, making vocabulary the basic element by which communication is performed. Scott Thornbury adds:"

You will see most improvement if you learn more words and expressions, you can say very little with grammar, but you can say almost anything with words".

In fact, for the previous reasons the lexical approach appeared as necessity viewed by several specialists and theorists .The lexical approach is a doctrine that considers learning vocabulary as the heart of any language acquisition. According to Jack Richards C. and Theodore S. Rodgers (2007):

A lexical approach in language teaching refers to one derived from the belief that the building blocks of language learning and communication are not grammar, functions, notions, or some other unit of planning and teaching but lexis, that is words and word combinations."

In other words , restricting the meaning of constructing sound linguistic background can only be based upon the ability to master manipulating words and combining them together. This attitude goes in harmony the view of Zu Feng-xia (2009), who argues that using the lexical approach is a good way to acquire English vocabulary knowledge. He thinks that the approach has encouraged learners to see larger units of the language and focus attention on naturally occurring expressions rather than rule-generated sentences.

More specifically , using the lexical approach for the acquisition of ESP vocabulary seems to have become a modern linguistic concern, as it is related to a more professional development. Janulevièienė, V.,and Kavaliauskienė, G comment on this: “ *In ESP , students have to learn high-priority lexis, which needs to be selected and included into learning materials and class activities”*

Several researches have indicated that vocabulary richness is a crucial element for the reading ability. Laflamme (1997:373) states that recent research has identified vocabulary knowledge as the most important factor in reading comprehension. In the same way there are also enough studies that illustrate a strong link between reading and writing. Laflamme (ibid) states:

Reading and writing are two analogues and complementary processes in that both involve generating ideas, organizing ideas into a logical order, drafting them a number of times to achieve cohesion, and revising the ideas

as if appropriate.

He adds : *“The processes are so closely aligned that some researchers even advocate teaching reading and writing simultaneously , rather than as two separate subjects”.*

So, as long as the writing ability is closely linked to the reading process, and this latter is mostly based on vocabulary, it automatically appears that the writing process is like -wise dependent upon vocabulary. In this part we are going to explore the views of some practitioners and field specialists on the effects of vocabulary on the writing ability, and how can vocabulary enhancement be used by teachers specifically to improve writing skills.

In fact, vocabulary adequacy in several ways presents a decisive element in the writing ability even more than the ability to read does. When students, for instance, learn how to decode words , they may be able to read and pronounce many words that are unfamiliar to them , as they may be able to guess accurate meanings of difficult words by simply examining the context in which words are used. However during the writing process the learner is deprived of the opportunity of observing the context in which a word is used, rather they have to create a context for themselves. Thus, the learner must be able to spontaneously recall words that are known not only by sight , but that are understood well enough to be used correctly . Mayher and Brause (1986) state:" *Writing is dependent upon the ability to draw upon words to describe an event*"(Corona, Spangenberg & Venet, 1989:18).

Students' vocabulary richness will have clear impact on the quality, efficiency of their writing. As Ediger (1999:1)) notes," *Variety in selecting words to convey accurate meanings is necessary in speaking and writing, the outgoes of the language arts*", Corona, Spangenberg and venet (1998:26) comment:" At any level, written communication is more effective when a depth of vocabulary and command of language is evident".

It is then clear enough that the most important tools of any writer are words. Classroom learning then must consider vocabulary acquisition and development as an important and ongoing part of classroom learning. Several key principles are suggested by specialists for the guidance in the creation and implementation of a comprehensive vocabulary development program, they include:

1-Teachers must offer direct instruction of techniques or procedures for developing a broad and varied vocabulary. This instruction can be provided both formally through the language arts program, and informally through various classroom interactions such as story time with students.

2-New vocabulary terms must be connected to students' previous knowledge and experiences. If students are unable to contextualize new words by attaching them to words and concepts they already understand, the words will likely have little meaning to them.

3-*"Students should be able to contextualize the vocabulary terms they have learned and use them in society"*(Ediger, 1999:7).In order for students to do this successfully, they must first learn to become comfortable using these words in the classroom. Students should be required or encouraged to incorporate new vocabulary terms into their oral and written reports and presentations.

4-*"Practice and repetition are important methods by which students can become familiar with new words and understand how they may be used correctly"*(Laflamme,1997). Students should be frequently exposed to the same words through practicing exercises , classroom use, and testing.

5. Teachers should model an enthusiasm for and curiosity about new words through their own behaviors and attitudes. Teachers who are enthusiastic about vocabulary development will automatically look for "teachable moments" throughout the teaching procedure , pointing out interesting words as they crop up in texts, stories, or conversation; asking students to explore alternative ways of expressing concepts; and helping identify colorful, descriptive ways of speaking and writing.

6. Schools, teachers, and students must be committed to vocabulary development over the long term. The teaching of vocabulary must be an interdisciplinary project, integrated into the curriculum at every level.

Thus, improvement in vocabulary will result in improved writing skills only if the teacher is able to create a classroom that takes writing seriously. *"In such a classroom, process and environment are closely intertwined and interdependent. The process does not come alive unless the environment is conducive to it"* (Corona, Spangenberg, &Venet, 1998:24).The following are techniques that teachers can use to create a writing-centered classroom:

1. Sharing vocabulary-rich literature. Sloan (1996: 268) explains that in her quest to help her students become better writers, she said: *"went to the best source for teaching good writing: good books"*. By having students read (or reading aloud to them) books, poems, and stories

that contain interesting vocabulary, teachers can both introduce new words and provide a forum for discussing them.

2. Helping students become aware of and look for interesting words. There are many different forms this can take. For example, students could pair up and look through books for words that catch their attention, then write down common words that the author could have used instead. Other methods include having students: *"write words they encounter on an 'Interesting Word Wall' (Ibid); 'create a word bank through words-of-the day that are taken from classroom literature'; (Corona, Spangenberg, and Venet, 1998: 25); 'record or act out energetic verbs; or write unfamiliar words in 'literature-response journals' for later exploration (Manning, 1999: 3).*

3. Offering a variety of writing opportunities. *"A writer-centered classroom emphasizes using written expression to communicate ideas. Writing is an important part of all areas of the curriculum"* (Corona, Spangenberg, & Venet, 1998: 29). The authors go on to note that students have a greater investment in their writing when they are given choices about their assignments. Such choices may include journal or diary entries, weekly logs summarizing journal entries, book reports, outlines, poetry, autobiographies, short stories, or any number of variations on the above.

4. *"Providing ample time for students to fully experience the writing process"* (ibid). The teaching of writing should be approached as a process that must be studied in depth, and substantial blocks of time should be devoted to writing.

5. *"Allowing students to conference with teachers and fellow students"* (ibid). When writing-topics are chosen, students should meet their teacher to discuss ideas and answer questions. The teacher's role is to encourage, build on existing strengths, and help the student expand his or her abilities. Conferencing with fellow students gives the budding writer the opportunity to share ideas, brainstorm, and rework his or her project.

All in all we would say that relying on the lexical approach seems to be a second to none means to really reach acceptable writing for an effective communication.

4. Business Writing and Business Vocabulary

Today's business world is administered through precise as well as documented materials , so as to maintain the business operation and protect its reliability and its confidence. This operation that demands several procedures' to have guarantees on which the whole operation stands on , and obviously this task is carried out through the written form and paper material.."(Scrivener 2009:192) shows:

Many students have specific needs that require them to work on writing skills: study, communication, preparation and business English are three common areas where written work is still very important.

In reality, the necessities of the field of business are the impulse that obliges the EBP learners to have a kind of mastery in the written communication . Penny Ur (2007:162) adds: *"the objective of teaching writing in a foreign language is to get learners to acquire the abilities and skills they need to produce a range of different kind of texts."*

Business written communication that includes : reports, letters, agenda, contracts, manuals, CVs...etc., is an essential part of the day today activities of most business. Hyland Ken (2002:211) clarifies:

The value of effective writing to these learners is obviously crucial, and courses, text books and reference materials have addressed the components and writing practices of such texts as manuals, technical reports, memos, proposals and a variety of business report genres.

Writing also permits communication through time and space, in that it guaranties a undeniable means of storing information, as it contains more explicit coding of logical relations added to structurally elaborate complex and formal way of conveying messages. *"Written communication offers different challenges from spoken interaction, in one way, writing is easier than speaking , in that it is not usually spontaneous and near instantaneous"*(Frando,E,2005 :81).

When communicating in a written form, one possibly is prone to face less linguistic constraints in order to perform well, compared to the spoken form. The speaker, then has less opportunities to purify his speech, organize his ideas, and select his words, simply because

timing is very crucial in this verbal communication, in contrast to the writer who may have enough time to adorn his written communication.

In today's world, it seems that many business managers suffer from inadequate communication skills. The December 1990 issue of the Training and Development Journal (in Allen .W ,1998) reports that "*Executive polled in a recent survey decry the lack of writing skills among job candidates*". A report in 1993 issue of Management Review (ibid) notes the liability imposed on business by poor writing skills. The report states that employees are beginning to place greater emphasis on communication in hiring practices. Many employers have adopted policies requiring job candidates to submit a brief written report as part of the screening process. An August 1992 issue of Marketing News (Ibid) reveals that employers seek motivated communicators for entry level marketing positions. Obviously, the pressing lack of adequate writing and communication skills in the world of business is great.

The ability to communicate effectively is of great advantage in the professional as well as personal life. It can help to create a good rapport with people and enable the person to play important roles in different situations. Learners need to possess good communication skills for different purposes and need a wide and deep vocabulary for that, no matter what the situation.

Your communications to other people can be broken down into four categories: observations, thoughts, feelings, and needs. Each category requires a different style of expression and often a very different vocabulary, (Mckay,M,DavisM&Fanning P,2009:36).

A good knowledge of words helps to use exactly the right words in the right places, allowing the learner to improve communication, and thereby gain the respect of other people, improves his/her confidence, and increases chances of success. Since language is the vehicle of such a communication, which needs to be clear and precise for the comprehension of ideas, development and execution of plans analysis of results, and more having an extensive knowledge of business vocabulary words that gives a great advantage in a variety of situations.

Business vocabulary and business words are terms that are widely used by corporate employees rather than linguists. No precise definition exists as to which words and expressions are part of the corporate vocabulary, and which are not, nor is such a definition

necessary . Actually, we may consider the words and phrases that we encounter and use mainly at work and for official communication as part of the business vocabulary.

The corporate world develops and maintains words , expressions and even style of language, that is ideal in its dominion. And a part of from this general vocabulary that can be used in any corporate environment, specific businesses develop their own terminologies, technical and non-technical, to deal with their specific needs" *Business policy has a tendency for jargon that delineates and isolates the field from the uninitiated*"(Leontiades, M,1982:45).

Knowledge of business vocabulary words and phrases is important for communicating with colleagues and partners. It helps to identify one's own with his workers and prevents him from sounding out of place .Here are two examples to clarify the idea. At the office, the statement : " We've got a project off the ground", sounds more like " You are one of the team" than the statement " We've started a project". Similarly, if a project doesn't go well, you " Have to pull the plug on the project", rather than "Abandon the project "or "End the project."

To make matters clearer, the corporate vocabulary keeps changing as expressions "Once in vogue" became old-fashioned and out of use, and new expressions take their place. Business learner has no choice but to learn constantly the changes in the usage of the idiomatic words and phrases at the place of work, also certain terms and trends are more popular at one time than another.

Conclusion

To conclude with , the lexical approach that has been viewed throughout this whole research to be a helping tool for EFL/ ESP learners is a means that has a lot of benefits in creating conscious , active , creative and critical writing learners. However, it requires a lot of responsibilities from both teachers and learners to be free from routine and monotonous teaching /learning classrooms.

As far as our raised research questions and set up hypotheses are concerned , we think that they have been answered to some extent .This led us to confirm that vocabulary is one serious obstacle which hinders marketing learners from writing effectively. It is also worth noting here that learning / teaching strategies are one main reason for this handicap and hence teachers as well as learners should both follow suitable strategies and approaches according to their learning needs. Thus far, we dare say that the hypothesized view stating that marketing learners written communication deficiency is basically due to the lack of their (core/academic) vocabulary has a great deal of acceptance. However this does not deny the fact that there are other elements that surely have a bad effect on their writing.

All in all , this lexical approach seems , at least for us ,to be achievable and can become a concrete fruitful reality , if all the members of the teaching /learning settings cooperate and strongly believe in its possible implications and hold positive attitude towards its results.

Statistically speaking, teachers' questionnaire in this work shows that 75 % of respondent teachers in this present study do consider vocabulary as a crucial and decisive element for an effective writing, this which is considered as the corner stone for our entire attitude. In addition, learners' questionnaire reveals that (90 %) of participants have agreed upon the fact that if they learn sufficient vocabulary, their written communication will be better.

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