



Teaching English vocabulary in degree colleges in Telangana: A critical study

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Abstract: An attempt is made in this paper to teaching English vocabulary in degree colleges in Telangana. Vocabulary plays a central role to the teaching and learning English as a second language. The knowledge of words and their usage enables learners to get involved meaningfully in all forms of spoken and written communication. Word knowledge is power. Words are linguistic elements that serve as building blocks to language learning. Usually, vocabulary of Mother Tongue can be built through constant exposure to the Language in the form of listening and reading. Teaching vocabulary as an activity is missing in Telangana colleges, with few exemptions. The vocabulary exercises given in the English textbooks at all levels are not exploited by the teachers/lecturers for giving practice to the students. Thus, it is a need of hour to review various teaching methods, techniques and strategies adopted by the teachers at the Degree College in Telangana for helping learners' master English words in classroom

Key words: English, Teaching, Telangana, vocabulary

Introduction: Vocabulary plays a central role to the teaching and learning English as a second language. The knowledge of words and their usage enables learners to get involved meaningfully in all forms of spoken and written communication. Word knowledge is power. Words are linguistic elements that serve as building blocks to language learning. Usually, vocabulary of Mother Tongue can be built through constant exposure to the Language in the form of listening and reading. However, in a Second Language classroom, it is unlikely that students will acquire the essential words needed for meeting the day-to-day situations. It is in this context that teacher assumes a significant role in helping students learn vocabulary as well as equip them with strategies for learning words. The article focuses on the problems faced by the Under-Graduate learners in Degree College in Telangana and the ways of teaching

vocabulary to the learners to ensure optimal retention.

Teaching English Vocabulary: Strategies: According to the study of Hatch and Brown, learners' strategies for learning vocabulary fall into five essential steps:

1. Having sources for encountering new words;
2. Getting the forms of the new words;
3. Learning the meanings of the words;
4. Making a strong memory of the words; and
5. Using the words.

According to Qi Pan and Runjiang Xu, 'Based on the vocabulary acquisition theory, while teaching vocabulary, teachers should take into account the three important aspects of vocabulary learning-word form, word meaning and word use. In other words, vocabulary teaching should cover both the central features of lexical items and their relations with other words.' The findings from psycholinguistic research reveal



that a student needs to encounter a new word 12 to 16 times too effectively "internalize" it. The behavioral and cognitive theories of language learning attest to the same.

The Present Scenario: There are many reasons for the students' inadequate competence of English vocabulary with the comprehensive level that a graduate is expected to possess. First and foremost reason is that though the English language is introduced in schools and colleges, it is widely and wrongly considered as one of the *subjects* instead of as '*a set of skills*'. Unfortunately our education system has evolved itself over the years to make the students study English for only getting pass marks in the exams. For this they learn by heart the lessons which are prescribed mainly for improving language skills.

In fact, teaching vocabulary in English language has been included as an important component in school and college curricula in our language education system, teaching the important basic linguistic components has been given much less attention than it actually deserves. The same thing is happening in the Degree colleges with Telugu or Urdu as the medium of instruction in the state of Telangana. Usually a graduate is expected to have got exposed to words in English for at least 10 years. Even after learning English for two more years at the college level, the student is unable to get a minimum level of proficiency of English vocabulary with which she or he can take part in real-life and academic communicative contexts. The same is the case with the majority of the post-graduates too in the state of Telangana.

Teaching vocabulary as an activity is missing in Telangana colleges,

with few exemptions. The vocabulary exercises given in the English textbooks at all levels are not exploited by the teachers/lecturers for giving practice to the students. With technology at our door-steps, the widespread availability teaching material and internet downloads of files has vastly increased potential input material for language learning, especially through intensive visual and oral practice. However the students studying in our colleges are deprived of certain level of English words.

Need of the Hour: Extensive research in English Language Teaching (ELT) methodologies, availability of teachers, teaching/learning materials, to some extent necessary infrastructure do not seem to come to the rescue of the learners who are coming from the poorest of the poor, marginalized and disadvantaged sections of the society and for whom mastery over English language skills serves as a double-edged sword for both overcoming their poverty by getting employment opportunities and being successful in their real-life situations where English is increasingly used. Hence we need to look into the following aspects of teaching vocabulary at under-graduate level in Telangana:

1. We need to review various teaching methods, techniques and strategies adopted by the teachers at the Degree College in Telangana for helping learners master English words in classroom.
2. It is necessary to inquire into various ways to further improve or develop learners' learning strategies for improving proficiency level of learning vocabulary in English language.
3. The teachers should use authentic teaching material by taking into account the level of word power of



the students at the college level and their prior exposure to English words.

4. The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) techniques facilitate better presentation of vocabulary learning activities in the classroom. The college teachers should be periodically trained in using the CLT techniques to import these important linguistic chunks/blocks to the students.

5. Measures should be taken to remove the incongruity between the objectives of teaching English and the testing methods to assess the students' vocabulary knowledge and usage at the UG level.

6. Tailor-made and short-term remedial courses have to be prepared to help the under-graduate students in Telangana State for enhancing their word power in the target language.

7. Infrastructure facilities like English Language Laboratory (ELL) should be established in every college and be utilized them to the optimum level.

Techniques of Teaching Vocabulary
Some of the best known methods/techniques used for effective transaction of teaching and learning of English vocabulary can be used to help our students have mastery over English vocabulary. Vocabulary cannot be taught in isolation. An integrated approach is useful in teaching vocabulary to the UG students. This approach should include Pronunciation and Spelling, Grammar and Word formation.

1. **Contextualization:** Empirical evidence testifies that words are learnt more effectively when they are presented or learnt in a context, not in isolation. Hence teacher should teach vocabulary based on Semantic Field Theory. The Semantic Field Theory

propagates that linguistic items occur in a group, not in isolation. For example, a word 'book' comes in a semantic field of 'stationery'. Hence they are to be presented in context.

2. **Association:** It is proved beyond doubt that teaching vocabulary or words is more effective when they are associated with the real objects. It is like creating mental linkages with the abstract words and related concrete articles.

3. **Word Formation:** Nattinger says, 'to know the meaning of a word becomes the task of knowing its associations with other words.' In order to help the students learn the lexical chunks- words, teachers must present students with the rudiments of word formation like, common roots, prefixes, suffixes. Hence word formation is one of the best methods to teach vocabulary.

4. The **Usage of Word/Vocabulary Games:** Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) advocates that linguistic items such as words are learnt more effectively and efficiently when they are presented to the learners in such a way that the learners are engaged in an activity. In this regard, word games are every much helpful to the learners.

5. **Teaching Words through Grammatical Categorization:** One of the ways of teaching vocabulary is presenting words in their grammatical category wise. In this method, once the learners are familiar with the one root word, they can easily master its grammatical derivatives. For instance, once a learner knows a word, 'photo' s/he is to be introduced with its grammatical products such as *photograph*, *photographer*, *photographic*, *photogenic*, *photovoltaic*, etc.



6. **Teaching Vocabulary using Good**

Dictionaries: A standard dictionary is one of the best teaching/learning sources in vocabulary in English. A teacher should exploit this linguistic tool for helping learners improve their vocabulary- words, their meanings, spellings, pronunciation, origin, etc.

7. Memorization, recording and storing lexis, rote learning, mnemonic techniques are some other techniques for presenting English vocabulary to the UG students.

Conclusion: Vocabulary is considered as the foundation for language acquisition/ learning. Words are the basis of any language and have rightly assumed a pivotal role in shaping careers of the under-graduates studying in the Degree Colleges in Telangana. These objectives can be realized in terms of improved teaching material for teaching vocabulary at the colleges through careful selection of input sources which are authentic, interesting, varied and challenging. The teaching/learning tasks should be creatively designed so as to give opportunities for the students to activate their own knowledge and experience towards better learning of English with special reference to English words. Then only we can make our students universal learners.

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