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Teaching Vocabulary through Newspaper Advertisements: An Innovative Experience

Anisha, M.Phil. (ELT), M.A., B.Ed., Ph.D. Scholar

Frustration with Choice of Words

Many teachers in India face the challenges of teaching English because the students' native language is not English. It is the need of the hour that teachers should certainly know more about effective strategies for teaching English.

Everyone - from beginners in English to veterans in journalism - knows the frustration of not having the appropriate word immediately. Sometimes it's a matter of not being able to recall the right word; sometimes we never know it. It is also frustrating to read a newspaper or homework assignment and run across words the meanings of which elude us. Language, after all, is power.

Importance of Word Power

Language is not possible without words. Words are like bricks that are used to build a small house or a big building. Words are the building blocks of language and knowledge of more words gives more clarity in writing. A right word at the right place makes the language precise and correct and helps in correct expression of the thought intended to be expressed. And for correct expression of thoughts, words have to be joined with one another to make complete sentences; hence the need for teaching connecting words, i.e., prepositions and conjunctions. But vocabulary learning is the focal point for communication. Students who are not able to construct complete grammatical sentences can still get their message across if they know some key high-frequency vocabulary.

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Words and Advertisements

Newspapers often carry advertisements that explore the meanings of words and phrases; they present a unique opportunity for building vocabulary. Expanding new vocabulary is essential for the effective communication and so helpful are newspaper advertisements! These advertisements often emphasize peculiar words that won't find themselves into anyone's working vocabulary, but they can still make learning a fun. Learning one new word leads to other new words, little constellations of meaning that keep the brain cells active and hungry for more. Students generally do not retain words after one listening and need multiple exposures and experiences with new vocabulary.

Ads as Tools to Teach English

Different types of advertisements can be used effectively to develop vocabulary of learners. All the above information tells us about the need of enriching the vocabulary of students. For the enrichment of vocabulary, different strategies can be used: Association, Using Pictures (Look and Say), Synonyms and Antonyms, Conversation, Lead Questions, Daily Puzzle (Meaning versus Word), Magic Thread (Word Game), Fill in the blanks etc.

Skills Working as Strategies

Despite the strategies and games, it is virtually difficult for a child to learn all the words and to get mastery over the rest of the content. In addition, the conventional rote learning, drilling, or memorization does not help learners to retain words on a long-term basis. To help learners become confident and independent readers and writers, the instruction might be coupled with the skills. Among the aforementioned strategies, some have been applied practically.

Design Overview

To ensure that all the five strategies are helpful more or less in the instruction of teaching vocabulary, the plan of the study aims at sensitizing the learners through each strategy. The sample chosen for the implementation is a large mixed group of intermediate students. To examine the feedback of the strategies, seven exercises have been made. Firstly, a *Diagnostic Test* has been conducted to analyze the participants' pre-knowledge, so that activities could be designed accordingly and how much exposure to words they needed. While implementing strategies, instructional process has been blended with interesting activities to arouse the interest of even the least active and least interested participant. To examine the effects of the five strategies and activities conducted, a *post-test* has been administered. Later on, mean and coefficient of correlation has been computed to see whether the effects of implied strategies on teaching and learning vocabulary are positive or negative.

Field Work

The research has been carried out on a large mixed group of 27 students in S. D. Girls Post-graduate College located at Hansi, (Distt. Hisar, Haryana in India). The college is affiliated to Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra. All the participants were of intermediate Language in India www.languageinindia.com

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level but on the basis of the diagnostic test, it was found that their level was lower than it should be and it was because of not having the proper guidance. Secondly, they were not so much confident in this language for being exposed to it for the first time. Despite all this they were very enthusiastic and showed keen interest in the activities.

Procedures: Data Collection

The data about the pre - knowledge and post - knowledge was collected through *Observation, Diagnostic Test* and *Post Test*. The activities were documented and supported with 45 visuals. Audio of the interaction among the learners and the teacher was recorded.

No code-switching took place during the activity and all interactions were in the target language. The following strategies were implemented: *Story-Telling, Using Pictures, Synonyms, Association* and *Magic Thread*. The students taken as a sample pack were 27 who actively participated in all the activities applied.

Previous Knowledge Testing

Teacher: Do you read English newspapers?

Students: Yes.

Teacher: Which newspaper do you like to read?

Students: The Times of India (a common answer)

Strategy 1: Story-Telling

The teacher provided the cuttings of newspaper advertisements to the students and asked them to make a list of the difficult words. In order to create interest and teach those words the teacher used the strategy of story-telling. With the purpose of involving participants, the story was narrated:

Now, the question is for all of you *gorgeous* girls. Why are you *stunned*? Aren't you *gorgeous*? Of course, you are. Are you *passionate* about cooking? Have you ever committed any blunder while cooking?

Now I will tell you a story about a girl named Maggie. She was a *gorgeous* and *passionate* girl like all of you. She was really an *eminent* girl. She was *competent* to do any work that she took in hand. And she had the *potential* to learn new things. Once she was *captivated/ fascinated* by her aunt's cooking. She was *eager* to learn how to cook? That is why she went to her aunt's home for learning. She started making a new dish. She was asked to put salt in that but instead, she put sugar. Can you guess the result? Naturally, the dish prepared was not good. Her friends laughed at her.

Can you guess the reaction of her aunt? Was she happy or did she vomit it out? Her aunt was a nice lady. She ate up the dish quietly because she did not want to *demoralize* the girl. As a good adviser, she *motivated* Maggie for

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cooking the same dish again. She tried again the same dish and the dish prepared was so tasty that everybody was *stunned*.

What have you learnt from the story? If you want to learn anything, you must have determination. And presence of mind is needed to do any work perfectly.

Story-Telling

Story-telling includes facial expressions, performing actions, and the use of target words selected from newspaper advertisements. It has been used for presenting target words in context. Story-Telling has been used for vocabulary development of the following words: *passionate, gorgeous, captivated, eager, competent, eminent, stunned, motivation*, etc.

Strategy 2: Using Pictures (Look and Say)

Look and Say is the technique in which students listen to the teacher and look at the object or print, then repeat a word or sentence after the teacher. The flash cards shown to the students had a sentence with the use of the target word and the picture according to the context. For instance, an illustration of a room in which everything is in disorder was shown to teach the word *chaos*. And the sentences written on the flash-card are: 'There was a *chaos* in the room. All the furniture was at sixes and sevens.'



Strategy 3: Synonyms

The small cards were given to two groups of students. The target words were written on some cards and their synonyms on others. Students came randomly to find out the synonyms of the target words and they were reinforced accordingly.

Strategy 4: Association

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Association was used to present vocabulary items. This process of bringing ideas or events together in memory or conceptualizing proved to be strong strategy for English learners. The instructor demonstrated the activity before the learners to initiate. This was followed by writing some words in a disorderly fashion on the board and then to ask the students to rephrase it. For instance, the words of two different types of vocabulary are linked with two different strings:

Capital		Nutrition
	Cardiologist	Financial
Spices		Preserving
	Entrepreneur	
Minerals		Investment

Strategy 5: Magic Thread (Word Game)

The teacher broke the words according to the syllables and wrote on the board in disorderly fashion and asked students to make words without crossing any syllable. This game was used as a strengthening exercise for retaining the words for a long time.

	com		cap	
fi		cial	nu	tion
nan			ital	ad
tent		pe	tri	visor

While these five strategies have similarities, each relates to the principles of learning in different ways. What appears most obvious is that all five require the mental processes of rehearsal and recitation. Story-telling is the most important because it builds connections between new knowledge and what the child had already known.

Vocabulary Strengthening Exercises

For the reinforcement of the strategies some **vocabulary strengthening exercises** given to the students at the end are as:

Instruction: One word may be used twice to fill the blanks, if necessary.

Exercise 1:

Fill in the blanks with the appropriate words:

Financial, Capital, Investment, Requisite

1. One needs a huge for setting up a car- factory.
2. Can be reduced to a small amount due to a steep fall in the share market?
3. Mr. Ram Shankar had to shift to a smaller house because of his bad condition.

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- The company employs the number of men.
- A university degree has become a for a career in the field of computers.

Exercise 2:

Fill in the blanks with the appropriate words:

Thousand, fifty thousand, million

- My father spent more than a rupees to buy a bicycle for me.
- His parents bought him a motor-cycle in
- Mr. Sharma has paid more than a rupees for a big plot.

Exercise 3:

Fill in the blanks with appropriate words:

Stunned, Aspirations, destination, cardiologist, cardiologists

- The prince was to see the beauty of the princess.
- Mr. Sharma took a bus for Delhi because his was Delhi.
- Tushar has to become a film actor.
- Raju caught a train for Delhi but his real was Calcutta.
- His father had been complaining of pain in the heart so he took his father to a in Delhi.
- A team of performed a heart- surgery of our Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh on 24th January, 2009.

Exercise 4:

Fill in the blanks with the appropriate words:-

Captain, Accolade, gorgeous

- When Dhoni was selected as a captain of the Indian cricket team, it was the highest for him.
- The dress of the bride was so that everyone admired it.
- Kapil Dev was the of the Indian cricket team many years ago.
- decoration of the palace pleased every visitor.

Exercise 5:

Fill in the blanks with the appropriate words:-

Inevitable, Quest

- The driver was drunk and was driving at a fast speed; therefore, the accident was
- Naveen read a number of books in of knowledge about true meaning of religion.
- Raman had studied a lot before the examination. So, his success was
- A mountaineer is always in of adventure.

Exercise 6:

Guess the word with the given general meaning and match the items given in the two columns A and B:-

Column A

- A period of ten years

Column B

- A. Gorgeous

- | | |
|---|---------------|
| 2. Having the essential ability, authority, skill, knowledge, etc. | B. Awaited |
| 3. Introducing or using new ideas, techniques, methods, etc. | C. Competent |
| 4. Pleasurable, satisfactory, wonderful, very beautiful with rich colours and magnificent | D. decade |
| 5. A thing/ event for which somebody has been waiting | E. Innovative |

Exercise7:

Spelling Exercises for practice:

Scrambled words:

1. I N A L N I F A C-
2. P I A T A C L-
3. M N E T I V E N T S-
4. U I S I T E E R Q-
5. N I O S I A P R T A-
6. U N I S N G T N-
7. O I N I M L L-
8. S T E U Q-
9. L E I A N E B V T I-
10. S U O G E O G R-

Data Collection - Measures and Procedures

The focus of the study has been to suggest some useful strategies. Association of these strategies with vocabulary instructional process certainly affects vocabulary learning positively. For this, the overall effect of the five strategies was examined. To obtain a quantitative measurement of the effect from diagnostic test to post-test, *mean* of the achieved scores was computed.

Table 1: Total and Mean of scores

	Diagnostic Test	Post- Test
Total of the scores	1520	862
Mean of the scores	56.29	31.55

The table demonstrates the positive effect of applying the strategies for vocabulary teaching. The coefficient of correlation computed was +0.94 that is positive. It clears that if instructions of vocabulary are associated with learner-oriented strategies, positivism can be noticed in one’s attitude towards vocabulary learning.

Figure 1, i.e., a bar diagram demonstrates comparison between Diagnostic Test and Post-Test scores, and thus, shows graphically the positive effect of applied strategies. In the chart, red coloured lines show the marks (%) of diagnostic test and the blue coloured lines show the marks (%) of post – test.

To represent the data in statistical form, the following chart has been designed:

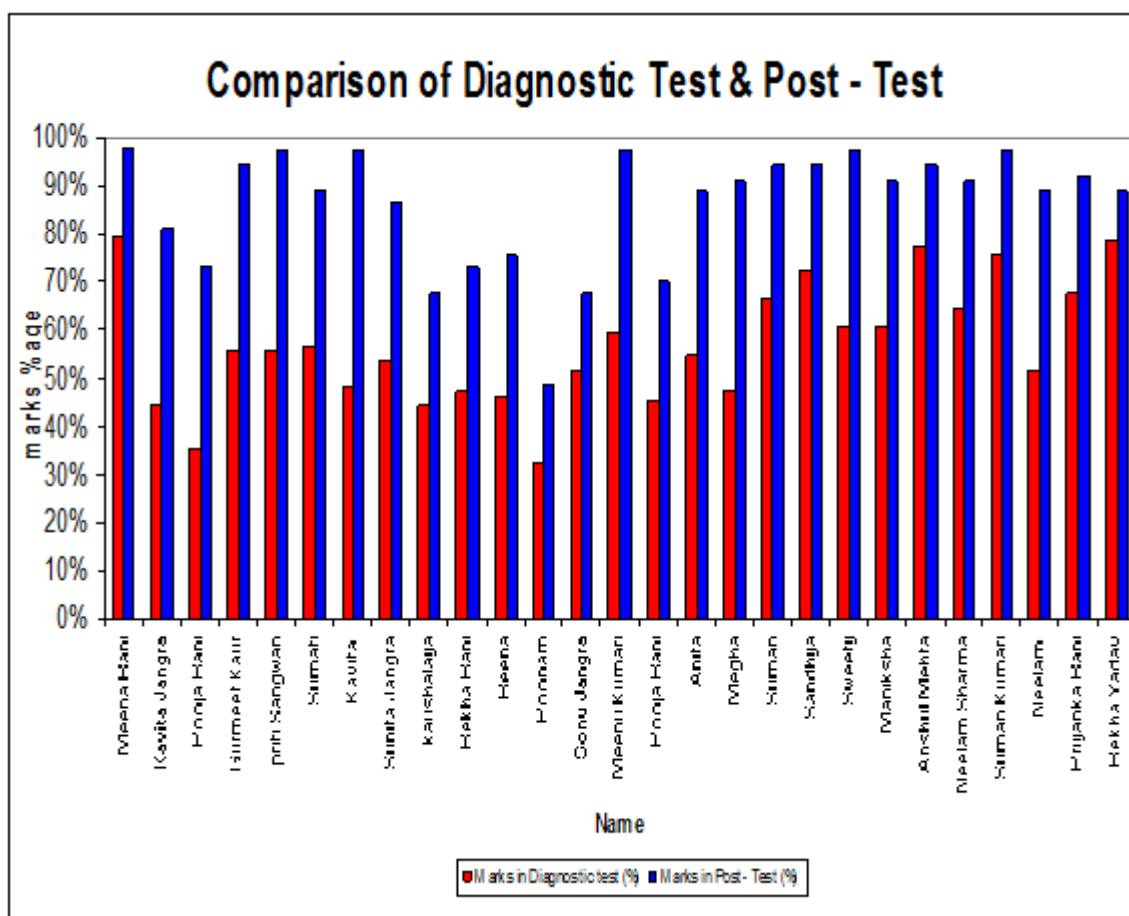


Figure1: Comparison between the marks (%) of students in Diagnostic Test and Post - Test

Application Results

It can be claimed through the *Diagnostic Test* and *Post-Test* results that all the five strategies used help in tremendous enrichment of vocabulary. The scores of both the tests show that the strategies used are successful. The chart also indicates the positive effect of implementation of strategies of vocabulary teaching. The coefficient of correlation also shows that the strategies are fruitful. No strategy is exhaustive in itself. All the strategies collectively prove very beneficial. However, it was observed that among the five strategies, *Story-telling* and *Using Flash-Cards* were enjoyed the most because they made learners understand the words according to the context. Synonyms were partially successful. It is advisable that taking all the five strategies as a whole and to use these adroitly, i.e. keeping in consideration individual needs, abilities, and interests, can make one achieve the aims of vocabulary teaching. The result, thus, supports the hypotheses that one strategy cannot work alone and practice is an essential part of instruction in vocabulary.

Conclusion

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To consider English as a subject makes it very boring to learn. Students start taking it as a burden that leads to boredom and consequently the greatest hurdle in effective learning. It does not prompt the learners to grasp and use things in their daily life. Monotony can only be ended through creative ideas; and what can be more creative than using newspaper advertisements to teach English.

Appendix 1

Name	Section	Class	Roll No.	Marks in Diagnostic test (%)	Marks in Post- Test (%)
Meena Rani	B	B.A.-II	C1	80%	97.79%
Kavita Jangra	C	B.A.-II	246	44.44%	81.08%
Pooja Rani	D	B.A.-II	211	35.35%	72.97%
Gurmeet Kaur	B	B.A.-II	30	55.55%	94.59%
priti Sangwan	D	B.A.-II	263	55.55%	97.29%
Sumati	D	B.A.-II	3	56.56%	89.18%
Kavita	D	B.A.-II	260	48.48%	97.29%
Sunita Jangra	C	B.A.-II	245	53.53%	86.48%
Kaushalaya	C	B.A.-II	197	44.44%	67.56%
Rekha Rani	C	B.A.-II	170	47.47%	72.97%
Reena	C	B.A.-II	198	46.46%	75.67%
Poonam	C	B.A.-II	80	32.32%	48.64%
Sonu Jangra	D	B.A.-II	222	51.51%	67.56%
Meenu Kumari	D	B.A.-II	12	59.59%	97.29%
Pooja Rani	C	B.A.-II	243	45.45%	70.27%
Anita	D	B.A.-II	31	54.54%	89.18%
Megha	B	B.A.-II	90	47.47%	91.89%
Suman	D	B.A.-II	40	66.66%	94.59%
Sandhya	C	B.A.-II	244	72.72%	94.59%
Sweety	D	B.A.-II	262	60.60%	97.29%
Maniksha	D	B.A.-II	7	60.60%	91.89%
Anshul Mehta	B	B.A.-II	114	77.77%	94.59%
Neelam Sharma	B	B.A.-II	115	64.64%	91.89%
Suman Kumari	B	B.A.-II	35	75.75%	97.29%
Neelam	A	B.A.-I	35	51.51%	89.18%
Priyanka Rani	A	B.A.-I	36	67.67%	91.89%
Rekha Yadav	A	B.A.III	53	78.78%	89.18%

Table 2: Details of Scores of Diagnostic Test & Post-test.

Name	Roll No.	Marks obtained in Diagnostic Test	Total Marks of Diagnostic Test	Marks obtained in Post-test	Total Marks of Post-test
Meena Rani	C1	79	99	36	37
Kavita Jangra	246	44	99	30	37
Pooja Rani	211	35	99	27	37
Gurmeet Kaur	30	55	99	35	37
Priti Sangwan	263	55	99	36	37
Sumati	3	55	99	33	37
Kavita	260	48	99	36	37
Sunita Jangra	245	53	99	32	37
Kaushalya	197	44	99	25	37
Rekha Rani	170	47	99	27	37
Reena	198	46	99	28	37
Poonam	80	32	99	18	37
Sonu Jangra	222	51	99	25	37
Meenu Kumari	12	59	99	36	37
Pooja Rani	243	45	99	26	37
Anita	31	54	99	33	37
Megha	90	47	99	34	37
Suman	40	66	99	35	37
Sandhya	244	72	99	35	37
Sweety	262	60	99	36	37
Maniksha	7	60	99	34	37
Anshul Mehta	114	77	99	35	37
Neelam sharma	115	64	99	34	37
Suman Kumari	35	75	99	36	37
Neelam	35	51	99	33	37
Priyanka Rani	36	67	99	34	37
Rekha Yadav	53	78	99	33	37

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