

Student-Generated Materials: A Tool to Teach Context-based Vocabulary

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Abstract: Language teaching is a dynamic phenomenon that varies according to the learners' needs and their socio-cultural background. Language teachers use various strategies and methodologies to teach a language innovatively. The English Language Teaching has reached its time to face the technologically updated learners. In this techno-savvy generation, there need not necessarily be one method for teaching a language and therefore, a teacher need not always confine to one particular text or material in a language classroom. In fact, a teacher could easily generate materials from the students themselves pertaining to a given context. This research paper aims to use online corpora for English Language Teaching by creating a context in order for the students to develop their vocabulary. The research also illustrates how the students' generated material could be helpful for a teacher to make them learn new words, their usage under different contexts and the grammatical understanding of the words in an implicit manner, through activity-based learning method. The objective of this method is to make students learn context-based vocabulary using online corpora and the meaning-making process involved in it, which will further enhance their language usage. An experiment was conducted using the above mentioned method among the first year B.Com and B.A. students of VISTAS. The findings revealed that the words mentioned by the students during the activity were found to be known to them since their school but were not used by them. Therefore, this study suggests that the context-based vocabulary teaching could make a learner to understand the usage of the words that they already know.

Keywords: Online Corpora, student-generated material, context-based vocabulary teaching

Introduction:

English Language Teaching all around the globe functions based on many teaching strategies for the learners to successfully acquire Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing skills. Language learning begins with letters and moves to words, pronunciations and grammatical forms. The predominant factor in obtaining the LSRW skills in any language is largely based on the learners' acquired set of vocabulary in that language. 'Vocabulary' is not simply a collection of words a person knows but it further exceeds to what extend a person uses those words. Therefore, when it comes to second language teaching, teaching the usage of words is equally important when introducing a new word to the learner. The words and their meanings could be taught based on the contexts, which will further help learners in remembering each word thereby making them to use it under right circumstances. In the aim of teaching vocabulary through activity-based learning method, this research uses the student-generated materials as a tool to teach words and their usage within a context.

Student-generated Material:

There are plenty of commercially available materials in the market as well as in many teaching forum websites. Yet, this study emphasizes on the use of student-generated material mainly because of its authenticity and learner-centeredness. Students' use of language itself is an input for producing their own material. When facilitated by the teacher, students move beyond the constraints and do a collaborative work in creating their own material. Such material is authentic and unique, and also helps to suit the specific need of their learning outcomes.

Teaching Vocabulary:

A textbook on 'Communication Skills in English' edited by the Department of English, Osmania University, Hyderabad, discusses that knowing a word means "to know its spelling, pronunciation, its core meaning along with as many other meanings as possible, its other forms, its functions, its usage and its status in the language"(36). Therefore, by 'teaching vocabulary', it is understood that a learner should be taught a word along with its meaning, usage, form and function. In general, the form of a word is its spelling while writing and its pronunciation while speaking. In this context, form refers to the grammatical position of the word. The textbook also discusses about the two aspects of vocabulary: active & passive vocabulary. The words which a learner knows

already and also uses them frequently while speaking or writing are their active vocabulary. On the other hand, passive vocabulary is made up of words one hears, reads and understands, but does not use normally in one's speech or writing.

Objectives:

This paper attempts to use student-generated materials as a tool to teach context-based vocabulary through activity-based learning method. The main objectives of the paper are as follows:

- To make passive vocabulary an active one by making learners recall the words they already know, identify their forms and understand the usage of those words under the given contexts
- To create a corpus of words generated by the students and use it as a material for peer-learning

Methodology:

This study uses an activity-based learning method for teaching vocabulary. Since context plays an important role, the entire activity is designed based on the context given by the teacher. Further, the activity is designed in such a manner that the teacher needs no other additional material to teach vocabulary. The output of the activity is the student-generated material which forms a corpus for teaching vocabulary. The first year students of B.A. Economics and B.Com Accounts & Finance studying in Vels University, Chennai were the sample chosen for this research. An experiment was conducted in both the classes with the students by using the same activity where the students were asked to generate words based on the given context. The activity was conducted in two different modes: individual and group. B.Com students were asked to do the activity individually on their sheets of paper whereas B.A. students were asked to do the activity by having the whole class as a group along with the teacher on the blackboard.

Procedures:

This research uses an activity to create a corpus of words generated by the students based on the given context. The context given for both the classes was 'Social Networking Sites'. The context was also clearly explained to the students with reference to few words as examples within the context. The activity for the students of B.Com who participated individually was conducted using the following steps:

Beginning: Students were told that they were going to do an activity and they had to do the activity upon the instruction of the teacher. The purpose of the activity was not intentionally told at the beginning of the activity to grab the attention of the students.

Setting a Context: Students were given a topic (which functions as the context) based on which they had to write as many words as possible under the given context within 3 minutes.

Brainstorming: Once the time stopped, another three minutes were given to students to write a new set of words in order to brainstorm more words pertaining to the same context.

Meaning-making: Students were asked to recognize the meanings of those words within the specific context. All the words were initially understood under the given context where they learnt the contextual meaning and the usage of the words.

Identifying the form: Students were asked to identify the grammatical forms (such as Noun, Verb, Phrasal Verb and Adjective) of the words written by them. They were asked to tabulate the words and count the number of words under each category.

Usage: The meaning-making facilitated the students to differentiate the words according to their form. Students also learnt the changes in meaning of a particular word that functions as a noun in one context and as a verb in different context.

Ending: Students were asked to frame sentences using the different forms of words both within the teacher-given context and in other contexts for better understanding of the words.

At the end of the activity, students were able to recall their passive vocabulary, identify the form of those words and analyze their meanings under the given context. The same activity was conducted to the students of B.A. by asking them to participate as a class along with the teacher. The students were explained the context and there was no timer set. Students came up with words as much as they could in group by telling the words aloud to the class. The teacher wrote those words on the black board and further asked the students to identify the form of the words written. Nouns such as *notification*, *newsfeed*, *channels*, *contacts* were circled while the Verbs such as *like*, *subscribe*, *comment*, *share*, *post*, *nudge*, *poke* were underlined and the phrasal verbs such as *log in*, *log out*, *sign in*, *sign out* were left untouched. Sentences were also discussed orally using those words and the contexts were also explained. As it was group participation, peer-learning was achieved as each student shared a word to the class.

Results:

The activity helped the students in generating many words pertaining to the context of 'Social Networking Sites' (SNS) and has also created a separate corpus which a teacher can use as a material that facilitates peer-learning. The researcher found the activity conducted among the students of B.A. who participated as a group along with the teacher to be more beneficial in promoting peer-learning when compared to the individual participation of the same activity conducted among the B.Com students. However, B.Com students' individual participation produced more words to the corpus creating a separate 'online corpora' (See Appendix) to teach context-based vocabulary. Since the words discussed in this activity falls under the context of SNS and are widely used or related to internet, the corpus created here is named as 'online corpora'.

Conclusion:

The student-generated material facilitates peer-learning when this activity is conducted as a group whereas the individual participation of the same activity improves the usage of one's passive vocabulary and makes it into an active one. Since the words are generated by students themselves, it serves as a solid material for the teacher to teach the form, meaning and usage of those words in the given context. When the students learn the form and function of the word under a context, it will be easy for them to remember the word and make use of it. The same activity can be conducted using various other contexts, which might be familiar to the students at a large scale. Contexts chosen by the teacher for the activity should be familiar enough for the students at the initial level and can be modified according to the need at the later stage. Further, the implication of this study is to teach vocabulary through activity by providing a context and also letting the students to generate words that they already know in order to make their passive vocabulary an active one by teaching the form of those words, its meaning and usage.

References:

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Appendix:

Given below is the Online Corpora created using the student-generated words in the context of 'Social Networking Sites' (SNS) which served as a material to teach context-based vocabulary.

Noun	Verb	Noun / Verb	Adjective	Gerund	Phrasal Verb	Phrase
Notification	Like	View	Live	Chatting	Log in	Create new account
Contacts	Comment	Archive	Online	Networking	Log out	Delete my account
Security	Share	Boomerang	Offline	Tagging	Switch off	About phone
Data Usage	Post	Screenshot	Active	Typing	Sign in	Software update
Profile	Ping	Link			Sign out	Draw pattern
Option	Nudge	Inbox				Clear all
Account	Uninstall	Text				Forgot pattern
Story	Poke	Store				Confirm password
Newsfeed	Search					Emergency call
Settings	Report					
Password	Refresh					
Audio	Unfriend					
Video	Block					
Voice Call	Unblock					
Recipients	Edit					
Timeline	Download					
Feedback	Upload					
Location	Vibrate					
Themes	Reset					
Gallery	Reboot					
Verification	Deactivate					
Admin	Subscribe					
Keypad	Follow					
	Play					