EFFECTIVENESS OF VOCABULARY KNOWLEDGE WITH REFERENCE TO TAMILNADU UNIFORM SYLLABUS ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS- A CASE STUDY

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Abstract: This paper analyses the effectiveness of the vocabulary aspect of Tamil Nadu Uniform syllabus English textbooks in the framework of Hendrickson's model of vocabulary acquisition. Learners of English as a second language are introduced to a wide range of vocabulary in the language learning process. However, one of the prominent issues in teaching and learning of vocabulary is that, only a few words become a part of the learner's vocabulary. There is less research conducted on the productive part of vocabulary than the receptive part of it. There is an obvious gap between the reception and production of vocabulary in second language learners of English. This paper aims to show that there is a possibility of bridging this gap when there is a clear understanding that vocabulary knowledge is not just to know the meaning and the form of a word but one which develops along a continuum or in a hierarchical order.

Keywords: acquisition, productive, receptive, teaching, vocabulary.

Introduction: Vocabulary can be termed as the building blocks of any language and it plays an inevitable role in conveying the meaning in both speech and writing. Though vocabulary as a field was given less importance in the initial stages of research in English Language Teaching, since mid 1990s, quite a lot of research is being done in the same, after understanding the significance of research in vocabulary. There is less research conducted on the productive part of vocabulary than the receptive part of it and much less research on the relationship between these two aspects of vocabulary. Learning of vocabulary begins from early stages of language learning. Learners of English as a second language are introduced to a wide range of vocabulary at various phases of their language learning process. However, very few of these words become a part of the learner's vocabulary. This brings the question whether words are taught and learnt in the right way.

Vocabulary to a very large extent influences an individual's language proficiency. If it is failed to be taught and learnt properly, it would later be a major hindrance in the higher studies of an individual, no matter which profession he/she chooses to be specialized. Language clearly is a tool for communication and hence is the foundation for any knowledge acquisition and production. The productive vocabulary is as important as the receptive vocabulary because when the learner passes the knowledge gaining phase in professional study and enters the knowledge producing phase, he has to pen down his accumulated knowledge in words, to communicate his contribution to his readers in a comprehensive manner. At that point of time, one's major concern should be that of the theoretical knowledge and not that of the search for a right word at the required context. Hence, vocabulary should be made as natural as possible to enable uninterrupted efficient language flow which can be achieved only by best pedagogical practices in the initial stages of the language learning.

Objectives:
- To investigate the concepts of vocabulary acquisition and vocabulary knowledge
- To examine the vocabulary teaching and learning practices of English language
- To study the approach adopted by the Tamil Nadu Uniform System of School Education or Equitable education system in teaching English language vocabulary
- To analyse the effectiveness of the English language textbook of Tamil Nadu Uniform Syllabus in vocabulary teaching and learning

Vocabulary Knowledge as a Multi- dimensional Construct: Henriksen (1999) defined vocabulary knowledge as a multi-dimensional construct. Henriksen claims that language develops along a continuum, or in some kind of hierarchical order. Henriksen has created a model of vocabulary acquisition based on development along three continua.

The partial-to precise continuum

The depth of knowledge continuum

The receptive-productive continuum

Henriksen's continua of vocabulary acquisition can be looked at as three dimensions of vocabulary knowledge.

(i) A partial-to-precise knowledge dimension where levels of knowledge are operationalized as degrees of understanding

(ii) A depth-of-knowledge dimension which reveals the multi-aspect nature of word knowledge, and extends to a word's syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations with other words

(iii) A receptive-productive dimension which refers to the mastery levels of vocabulary knowledge reflected in the learners' comprehension and production abilities

The first two dimensions are related to comprehension of word knowledge while the third dimension is associated with the ability to access and use a word. In order to understand the development of vocabulary knowledge from receptive to productive use, the partial-to-precise and depth dimensions should be included. Henriksen's proposal thus demonstrates the fact that learning a word is a gradual process. Henriksen's conceptualization of vocabulary acquisition is presented in Figure 1.

I   The partial-precise continuum
II The receptive-productive continuum
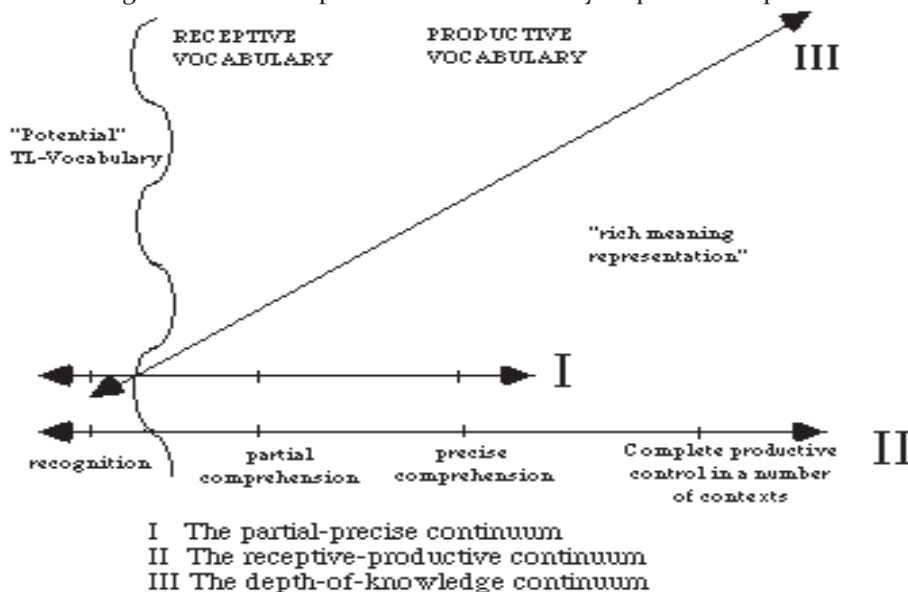III The depth-of-knowledge continuum

Figure 1: Henriksen's model of Vocabulary acquisition (1996)

Henriksen says that word meaning is learned along the partial-precise continuum (I), thus this is a knowledge continuum. Knowledge moves from initial word recognition through rough characterisation or vagueness to mastery of finer shades of meaning. That is, the better the word meaning is known, the further along the continuum one moves.

Henriksen says that vocabulary knowledge is understood as precise comprehension, which is viewed as the ability to translate the lexical items into the L1, the ability to find the right definition in a multiple-choice task, or the ability to give a target language paraphrase. Similarly, the more paradigmatic and syntagmatic relationships that are known, the further along the depth-of-knowledge continuum (III) one moves. As one comes to know a word better, the learner is said to draw on and develop the knowledge between lexical items. Therefore, she hypothesizes that development along the depth-of-knowledge continuum is an important factor for the development of partial to precise meaning. This is because the knowledge of a given word grows in relationship to other words and their relationships with others.

The receptive-productive continuum is a control continuum that involves the control or accessibility aspect of lexical competence, or whether the learner is able to use a lexical item receptively or productively. [3]

Thus the continuum of progression approach considers that vocabulary knowledge is not an 'all-or nothing' phenomenon (Laufer 1998), but starts from unknown to knowing, and develops to fully mastered level. Each of the word a learner knows can be located at a certain point in the continuum of word knowledge.[5]

Review of Literature: The researcher aims to present a comprehensive understanding of the importance of vocabulary, best practices in teaching and learning of vocabulary in the review of literature and a few research findings in vocabulary. Peter Duppenthaler in his research paper, *Vocabulary Acquisition: Research and its Pedagogical Implications,* presents a few important research findings in the field of vocabulary acquisition. Folse (as cited in Duppenthaler, 2008) says that research on second language acquisition issues such as student needs, teaching techniques, learner strategies and incidental learning has increased to a very large extent only since mid-1990s. [2] Despite the increase in the number of research done in this field, he claims that these research findings are very rarely put to practical application. His paper presents a range of vocabulary research findings which has the possibility of practical implementation in teaching vocabulary.

Susan Hanson and Jennifer F.M. Padua in their book *Teaching Vocabulary Explicitly*, state the following:Vocabulary refers to words we use to communicate in oral and print language. Receptive vocabulary refers to the words we understand through reading and listening. Productive vocabulary refers to the words we use to communicate through writing and speaking. In order to communicate effectively using oral and print language, we must be

able to flexibly use words that we recognize and understand. (2011, p. 5)[6]

The next chapter reasons out to why teaching vocabulary is very important. In reading and listening, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [NICHD], 2000 says that vocabulary knowledge is essential to comprehending text (as cited in Hanson & Padua, 2011, p. 12). When students do not understand at least 90% of the words in a text, they do not adequately understand what they read (Hirsch, 2003; Sedita, 2005; Hanson & Padua, 2011). Research suggests that students acquire 2,000 to 3,500 new words a year and know the meaning of approximately 50,000 words by the time they graduate from high school (Graves, 2006; Lehr, Osborn, and Hiebert, 2004; PREL, 2008; Hanson & Padua, 2011).

GülçinCoşgun in the introduction to his paper, *The impact of using wordlists in the language classroom on students' vocabulary acquisition,* clearly establishes a strong correlation between vocabulary and academic achievement. Abrudan says that words represent the building block upon which knowledge of the second language can be built (as cited in Coşgun, 2016, p. 49) and without them people cannot convey the intended meaning. The researcher realizes that the students experience a great difficulty in learning and using target vocabulary. He states that the "underlying reasons is that students and dents are exposed to a myriad number of words every day and do not know which words provide them with a working vocabulary."(Coşgun, 2016, p. 52)[1]

Alan Hunt and David Beglar in their article, *Current Research and Practice in Teaching Vocabulary*, present a systematic framework for vocabulary development by combining three approaches to vocabulary instruction and learning. [4] In this article, these three approaches--incidental learning, explicit instruction, and independent strategy development--are presented as seven teaching principles. The incidental learning of vocabulary requires that teachers provide opportunities for extensive reading and listening. Explicit instruction involves diagnosing the words learners need to know, presenting words for the first time, elaborating word knowledge, and developing fluency with known words. Finally, independent strategy development involves practicing guessing from context and training learners to use dictionaries.

Susan Hanson and Jennifer F.M. Padua in chapter five of their book, deal with analysing the essential components of vocabulary instruction. They bring in Michael Graves' concept of vocabulary (as cited in Hanson & Padua, 2011, p. 8). According to him, there are four essential components of vocabulary instruction as listed below.

1. Providing rich and varied language experiences
   Teaching individual words explicitly
2. Teaching word- learning strategies
   Fostering word consciousness

The sixth chapter of Teaching Vocabulary Explicitly lays emphasis on why it is important to teach individual words explicitly. The authors say that students learn new words when they are taught these words explicitly. Stahl (as cited in Hanson & Padua, 2011, p. 12) suggests that teachers can provide direction instruction of 300 to 500 words in one school year, or about 8 to 10 words per week. Selected words can be taught in depth and will provide students with the knowledge they need in order to comprehend what they read. Students who are not spending time reading independently need this direct teaching to help increase their vocabulary. Without the direct, in-depth teaching of key words, most students will face difficulties understanding what they read.

Also the chapter provides three steps and four strategies for teaching individual words explicitly (Beck, McKeown, &Kucan, 2002; Graves, 2006; NICHD, 2000; PREL, 2008; Hanson & Padua, 2011):
1. Identify the potential list of words to be taught.
2. Determine which of these words to teach.
3. Plan how to teach the words using the following strategies:
a. Provide a student-friendly definition.
b. Use the word in context and give contextual information.
c. Provide multiple exposures.
d. Offer opportunities for active involvement.

In the next chapter the authors talk about word-learning strategies: word parts, context clues, and dictionary use. Firstly they suggest three components for integrating the teaching of words parts into a vocabulary program.
- Provide students with knowledge of prefixes, suffixes, and root/ base words in focused lessons.
- Teach meaningful word parts explicitly as the need arises in the reading material.
- Teach students different strategies for analysing the word parts.

Secondly, the authors explain why context clues are important to teach on basis of Baumann's (as cited in Hanson & Padua, 2011, p. 30) point of view.
- The meaning of the word is sometimes stated in the sentence or sentences before or after the unknown word.
- There may be clues in the sentence or sentences before or after the unknown word.
- Some texts provide the meaning of the word, but students may overlook it.
- The most helpful hints are often found in the same sentence, but students do not recognize these hints.

- Some clues may be misleading. Students need to take the initiative and ask, "Does this meaning make sense in this context?"

Thirdly, the authors present Graves's (as cited in Hanson & Padua, 2011, p. 34) suggestion of ways to help students learn how to select the appropriate meaning in the dictionary.

- Read the sentence containing the unknown word.
- Before looking in the dictionary, think aloud and guess the meaning of the word based on the clues in and around the word.
- Explain that many words have several meanings and then read all of the dictionary's definitions for that word.
- Decide which definition makes sense within the context of the text being read.
- If the meaning is still unknown, provide further discussion about the context and look at word parts.

The authors in the chapter, 'Vocabulary activities', propose a variety of activities to support teaching individual words explicitly and to actively involve students in processing their learning. The suggested activities are glossary bookmark, vocabulary checks, vocabulary record, identifying tricksters and word wall. [6]

In fact, GülçinCoşgun in his research paper *The impact of using wordlists in the language classroom on students' vocabulary acquisition,* explores the effectiveness of making use of a word list in classroom and students' view on the process. The research confirms that using a wordlist on a word wall can be regarded as a working factor in fostering leaner's vocabulary acquisition.Yuka Yamamoto in his article, *Bridging the Gap between Receptive and Productive Vocabulary Size through Extensive Reading, investigates* the extent to which extensive reading combined with writing tasks promotes productive vocabulary growth of Japanese university students. There is always a general assumption that extensive reading increases one's vocabulary size. The researcher attempts to find the facts on the influence of extensive reading on the reader's vocabulary.

Contrary to expectations, no significant increase was shown in the amount of productive vocabulary size. However, the data suggested that one of the benefits of doing extensive reading with writing tasks is to retain receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge. The research thus implies that extensive reading practice might help students confirm the meaning and function of the words that are already stored in their memory systems making the connection stronger, which in turn may potentially develop into productive- vocabulary knowledge.[1]

Methodology: The researcher aims to examine the effectiveness of Tamil Nadu Uniform Syllabus in vocabulary teaching and learning by conducting a case study with two samples from the textbooks through the lens of the conceptual frame work of Henriksen's theory of vocabulary acquisition. The *SamacheerKalvi* or Tamil Nadu Uniform System of School Education or Equitable education system is a Government of Tamil Nadu, India programme to integrate the various school educational systems within the state which has over 1.2 crore students in four streams of school education comprising about 45,000 state board schools, 11,000 matriculation schools, 25 oriental schools and 50 Anglo-Indian schools, with different syllabus, textbooks and schemes of examinations.

Uniform System of School Education was implemented by Tamil Nadu Uniform System of School Education Act 2010 which paves way for quality education to all children without any discrimination based on their economic, social or cultural background. The new system of education was introduced for classes I and VI in the 2010 academic year. (http://samacheerkalvi.co.in/)

Analysis: The researcher examines the vocabulary aspect of the Tamil Nadu Uniform System Textbook. In particular, the research studies the case of the vocabulary aspects and exercises for teaching vocabulary in the English term 1 textbooks of grade 5 (primary) and grade 8 (middle school). 5th Grade's unit 1 of the English textbook is 'Man Versus Nature'. The lesson runs up to four pages and every page has a coloured box where the words which are bolded in the text are listed down and provided with meaning in English. Later, in the vocabulary section after the lesson there is a small exercise on the prefix and suffix. The lesson one in the English term 1 textbook of 8th grade is 'The Wooden Bowl'. The lesson runs up to 4 pages and in the same way meanings of the difficult words are listed down in a coloured textbox within the text. In the vocabulary section, there are two exercises. One is on syllabification of words and the other one is again an exercise on prefix and suffix. Considering the teaching part of the vocabulary, the teacher generally makes the students read aloud the bolded words with the meaning where the pronunciation is attended to. The students are also made to memorize the meaning of the words and are made to learn a few set of synonyms and antonyms. The stated meaning of the unknown word is explained again in L2 and the spelling is made sure by conducting dictation tests. Every student in the class understands the meaning of the words in various levels depending on the individual's potential and accumulative knowledge.

The learning outcome of this approach can be to some extent studied by looking at it from the learner's point of view. The assumed sets of learners for this study are the students of Tamil medium government schools who are exposed to these words

for the very first time. The learner by the end of the class would simply be able to recognize the word for a limited period of time and would have a vague understanding of the words. There are no other exercises in relation with these words in the textbook to help the students in knowing the words. Knowing the words is not an 'all or nothing phenomenon' (Laufer, 1998) but these textbooks seem to go by this phenomenon in vocabulary teaching and learning. [5] When the acquired knowledge of vocabulary through this approach is situated in the conceptual framework of Henriksen acquisition of vocabulary, it is seen that it falls in the very beginning step of the continuum. That is, it can be placed in the recognition part of Henriksen's continuum, which in fact just marks the beginning of the continuum. According to Henriksen's framework, the partial-to-precise dimension where levels of knowledge are operationalized as degrees of understanding and a depth-of-knowledge dimension which reveals the multi-aspect nature of word knowledge, and extends to a word's syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations with other words, together contributes to the comprehension of word knowledge. Therefore this approach of vocabulary teaching does not help in the comprehension of the word but gives only a vague understanding of the form and the meaning of the word. The textbook fails to give any attention to the further phases of continua for the complete understanding of the word.

Mere recognition of the form and meaning of the word does not help the learners to receive the words in other contexts. In this case, even the reception part of the vocabulary is not attended to wholly. The learner in any case, would not be capable to recall the word and produce in the required contexts. The learners should be provided with the opportunities to learn words incidentally, explicitly and intentionally as suggested in *Current research and practice in teaching vocabulary*. There is a flaw in laying the foundation knowledge to vocabulary which in future would influence the language efficiency of the learner to a large extent. There is a dire need to understand the theory of vocabulary acquisition and research findings in vocabulary and adopt them efficiently with clear instructions for teachers and students, in the English language textbook for second language learners of the language. Textbooks should provide explicit instructions and frame vocabulary tasks strategically which would help the learner to progress from just recognizing the word and escalate in the continua from recognition to complete productive control in a number of texts as theorized by

Henriksen. The researcher believes that when the textbooks prescribe the updated ways of teaching and learning vocabulary in accordance with the proposed theories of vocabulary acquisition and research findings in vocabulary practice, the gap between the reception and production of vocabulary would automatically be bridged.

Limitations of the Study: This study was subject to many limitations. First, generalizability of the conclusions might be questioned as the case study is conducted only with two small samples from the Tamil Nadu Uniform Syllabus Textbooks and with the information gained from a discussion with one of the trainers of DIET Tamil Nadu. The results may not be accurate because the aspects of vocabulary teaching are only analysed on the basis of existing theories and research findings and are not studied on the basis of data. Another limitation for the study is that since the study was conducted in a limited time, various other aspects of vocabulary could not be presented to analyse the textbook pattern. Therefore, it is difficult to come to the conclusion that when vocabulary is taught and learnt in the suggested ways, it will be retained over time and progress towards the complete understanding of the word.

As it is stated above, there are several limitations of this study. Nevertheless, in spite of its limitations, it is hoped that the total outcome of this study could be a starting point for more thorough investigations on best approaches which can be adopted in the Tamil Nadu Uniform textbooks vocabulary teaching and learning aspect. This researcher proposes to prove how teaching and learning vocabulary in the right way would actually bridge the wide gap between the reception and production of vocabulary in future studies.

Conclusion: The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of approach adopted in the Tamil Nadu Uniform Syllabus for the teaching of vocabulary. To achieve this goal, the study consisted of understanding the concept of vocabulary acquisition based on the conceptual framework of Henriksen and later presenting the research findings and a few best practices of teaching and learning of vocabulary. Post the analysis of the approach adopted in the textbook, the researcher suggests that awareness about the stated theories and practice of vocabulary research findings in Tamil Nadu English textbooks may shape the vocabulary aspect of it more effective to benefit the learners' in their vocabulary acquisition. The researcher through this case study also brings out the possibilities of bridging the gap between receptive and productive vocabulary.

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