

The Vocabulary Enrichment through Reading Comprehension for the Beginner Learners

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Abstract

Vocabulary represents one of the most important skills that are necessary for teaching and learning a foreign language. It is the basis for the development of all the skills such as reading, listening, speaking, and writing. Vocabulary is also the key to develop reading comprehension. As learners learn to read more advanced texts, they must pay attention to the meaning of new words that are not part of their oral vocabulary. The focus of this paper will be on why vocabulary is so important in reading, on what factors that make words difficult, on the main reasons for which students who start learning to enhance reading comprehension and on some techniques which help them learn the vocabulary. Besides, the result of this paper shows the guided reading method and bilingual method that the language teachers used to deliver the materials in teaching reading. In teaching and learning process, language teachers gave guidance, direction and information concerning reading comprehension to their students.

Keywords: reading comprehension, difficulties, importance of vocabulary

1. Introduction

Reading is the best way to improve vocabulary skill. Students can get mental power by reading many books. Only if they read, they can get the functional vocabulary in their brain. Then, they can use the words they memorized in their writing or speaking. Nevertheless, sometimes they may encounter many difficult words and phrases to read and translate in their reading passages. To understand the whole passage in details, firstly the students must pay attention to their passage, find words meaning, idioms, and phrasal verbs and must know sentence structures, patterns, and so on. The enrichment of vocabulary is the important part of reading skill. As the meaning of a word can be changed depending on the sentence structure, students need to use the lexical items effectively in the sentences. If the students are aware of the classification of the words, guessing meaning and context clues from the text, and ability of consideration depending on the author's opinion in the article, the text or reading book they learn will be easy to understand and translate for them. Therefore, both teachers and students should know the importance of vocabulary and specific techniques and effective strategies for their vocabulary improvement.

2. Literature Review

Vocabulary knowledge is mainly not taught as a skill in itself. However, learning a new language involves learning its lexis, grammar rules, and usages of a word and using them in the right way. Reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge are strongly connected with each other. Besides, the limited vocabularies can cause a problem about comprehending a text. Therefore, the more lexis the students learn, the more easy to read and translate for them. Although vocabulary is not the only important factor on its own in language learning, its value cannot be evaluated. In the language classroom, most of the students use a variety of their own methods to learn a thousand of words they acquire each year. Thus, teaching vocabulary is one reason for the teacher that is to facilitate the comprehension of a text. Therefore, the students should be assigned to read. [9] Having the specific techniques for learning vocabulary to improve the decoding skill in reading can be effective to become the excellent readers.

3. The Importance of Vocabulary in Reading

Words are the building blocks of learning a new language. Knowing the importance of vocabulary will be efficient in four skills. The students can make their knowledge of the target language develop by learning the lexical items or lexis. A range of a lexical item is required in order to get sufficient understanding in listening or reading or create ideas successfully in speaking and writing.

Moreover, the students should have the conceptual knowledge of words for the vocabulary enrichment. The wide range of vocabulary knowledge is a building process for the students, especially it is also called pre-existing knowledge. Thus, students' pre-existing knowledge can learn and know examples of the word and related words that make connections to other words and use the word correctly within the context of the sentence. [7] The greatest tool teachers can give their students is using the words they learnt not only in their education but also in life. Actually, to be proficient reader or translator, students need to improve their learning lexical items and have to know the importance of vocabulary in reading. Besides, the students need to acquire the amount of vocabulary each year that is estimated to be about 3,000 words a year [6].

In addition to the importance of vocabulary for success in life, a great vocabulary is more specifically reflective high levels of reading achievement.

4. Factors That Make Words Difficult To Read and Translate

All the language teachers look for an improvement in their students' reading speed easily without difficulty. As some factors make students delay their learning, they come across difficulty to read and translate in their reading passages because of not knowing vocabulary knowledge. To understand the whole passage in details, firstly the students focus on their reading passage, and then consider what about is. After that, they should find words meaning by using dictionary when they do not know the words. And they must know sentence structures, patterns, and etc. As the meaning of a word can be changed depending on the sentence structure, students need to use the lexical items effectively in the sentences. There are some factors that can make students difficult to understand and translate in their reading.

4.1. Idiom

One of the most important parts of English is 'idiom'. Idiom words are frequently used in every situation such as friendly conversations, business meetings, the formal and written contexts. If students do not know them, it is unachievable to understand the context. [10] There are many idiomatic words in reading passages. If the students do not know the meaning of idiomatic words, they can face with many difficulties to translate in their studies. Idiom words can make students misunderstand depending on the contents of the passage. Moreover, idioms always cause a lot of problems to learners of a foreign language.

4.2. Phrasal Verb

Phrasal verbs are very important words and commonly used in English language. The meaning of phrasal verb cannot be guessed by looking at the individual word. A phrasal verb has an isolated meaning which differs from the original main verb. Therefore, the students need to try to guess the meaning from the context. When they do not know or cannot guess, they need to look it up in a dictionary. Many phrasal verbs have more than one meaning. Thus, students can get a little difficulty understanding while they are learning a passage. For example: "I took out all the books I needed for my assignment from the library" (I borrow a library book) and "He took her out to a restaurant last Friday night" (He goes out socially with his girlfriend, especially a date).

The phrasal verb "take out" makes the students more complex. The other phrasal verb such as "get in" also has many different meanings. The teachers need to think that there are a variety of ways in learning phrasal verbs.

4.3. The Concept of Meaning

Students are afraid of thinking the concepts of meaning when they read a passage. They have to guess the meaning of word when they encounter unknown word in reading passages. To understand the whole passage, the obvious thing they have to do in reading is guessing the concept of meaning. [12]

The meaning of a word in the passage depends on the thought to express or the context of its expression. To know the exact concept of the meaning, students must know the correct definitions of the words. When in doubt about the definition of a concept or the meaning, the best way of clarification is to look for its reference.

4.4. Words with Several Meaning

To be efficient reader, students need to understand the words with several meaning in reading passages. Knowing different meaning from the words can easily be translated in reading. Students can get many benefits from specific vocabulary exposure and instruction. They can also improve their vocabulary skills through paying attention to the words and guided learning. And then, they need to recognise and use specific strategies to enrich their skills for understanding and using an increasingly rich vocabulary. Teachers know that multiple-meaning words cause unique problems to the students, and they should try to pay attention to their students when the students come across words with several meaning in discussions, on assignments, and in their reading. Besides, students have to be aware of the usage of the words and the different meaning of the words.

4.5. Unfamiliar Words

Sometimes students may find the meaning of an unfamiliar word that is given in the passages. Thus, they need to do something is keep on reading the sentence when they find unfamiliar words. If students fear concerning with the meaning of the words in reading passages, they will not understand the meaning of the sentence. Students must comprehend key words in a sentence in order to understand its meaning and extract important information. Understanding these key words and skipping less important ones will not delay their understanding. Guessing vocabulary from context is also the most common way the students discover the meaning of the new words. Therefore, students should be trained to guess from contexts, and should be given strategies to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words.

5. Using Dictionary is the Useful Tip for the Vocabulary Enrichment

One of the best ways to learn new words is to keep a good dictionary. A dictionary is a significant tool to help the students build their reading skills. Using dictionary can broaden students' horizons. The students,

who learn the foreign language, need to know how to use dictionary and to learn new words when they read a passage or text. Dictionary provides the meaning of an unknown word and finding its pronunciation. When a student meets with an unknown word in the text and fails to assume the meaning through context, they can find the explanations in a dictionary. By using it, students can decide the defined meaning of a word [5].

However, sometimes using dictionary can cause problem with the students' reading skills. To read easily, it is able to guess the meaning of unknown words using the other words around it. It is called guessing from context. It is important because it can help the students to read faster even if they do not have a good dictionary.

6. Methodology

This research used a qualitative method with questions and answers session to collect information. It intended to develop students' reading ability and vocabulary enrichment in their academic year. The mentioned factors above are very fruitful to gain the effective learning and know what factors make the students difficult in learning English.

6.1. Data Analysis

Data was collected from language teachers, total 9, University of Computer Studies (Taunggyi) in order to know about the improvement of vocabulary and reading skill of their students. And this study attempted to examine the reading problems of first year computer science and technology students, academic year (2019-2020), male – 47 and female – 38, total 85 were selected for the study.

Data was gathered by means of questionnaires and interviews. In order to investigate the interview to the language teachers and the questionnaire to the students, the teachers' outlook and the students' difficulties concerning learning reading skill were found out.

6.2. Research Questions for the Students

1. How long have you been learning English?
 - A. Since in Primary School
 - B. Since in Middle School
 - C. Since in High School
2. What is your purpose(s) of learning English?
 - A. To pass the examination only
 - B. To be an effective learner
 - C. To be helpful in your studies
3. Do you like being taught in English all the time in the class?
 - A. Yes
 - B. No
 - C. Sometimes
4. Do you have any difficulty in learning vocabulary in reading skill?
 - A. Yes
 - B. No
 - C. Sometimes

5. What are the main problems to read and translate you face in reading?
 - A. Idiom
 - B. Phrasal Verb
 - C. The Concept of Meaning
 - D. Words with Several Meanings
 - E. Unfamiliar Words
6. What do you do when you do not understand what you read?
 - A. Use a dictionary
 - B. Ask someone
 - C. Ignore it
7. Are you interested in doing reading and vocabulary activity? Why? Why not?

8. Do you think you need more practice for improving reading and vocabulary skills in the classroom?

9. Do you expect to do a lot of reading activities in the class? Why?

10. How did you expect to be trained to improve your reading skill?

6.3. Interview Questions for the Teachers

1. Which methods or approaches did you use in your language classroom?

2. Are you satisfied with the reading skill of the students?

3. What are the students' attitudes towards learning English?

4. Do you think enough time is allotted for teaching vocabulary and reading?

5. How do you assess your students' reading ability during the lecture time?

6.4. Data Collection Instruments

In this paper, two research tools were used to investigate the research questions: survey questions for the students and interviews for the language teachers at the University of Computer Studies (Taunggyi). The questions for the language teachers involved five optional. And the survey questions for the students consisted of four optional questions and six multiple choice questions.

6.5. Analysis of Students' Data

According to the data collected from students' research questions, students' difficulties and outlook were found out. The first research question for the students was, "How long have you been learning

English? For this question, all the students chose (A). They have been learning English since in their primary school. For the second question, “*What is your purpose(s) of learning English?*” For this question, the 45 students answered (B); they have learnt English to be an effective learner. The 35 students chose (C); they assumed that learning English is to be helpful in their studies. And the 5 students chose (A); they accepted that their purpose of learning English is to pass the examination only. For the third question, “*Do you like being taught in English all the time in the class?*” For this question, the 78 students’ answer is “No” and the 7 students chose (C). For this question “*Do you have any difficulty in learning vocabulary in reading skill?*” The 46 students chose (A), the 11 students answered (B) and the 28 students made a choice for (C).

For the fifth question, “*What are the main problems to read and translate you face in reading?*” the 48 students chose (A); most of the students are fear of idiomatic words because they lack of knowledge about that. The 24 students answered (B); they assumed that phrasal verbs are difficult to read and translate, and the 13 students chose (E); they thought that when they encounter with unfamiliar words in their reading, they fail to read and translate. For the last multiple choice question, “*What do you do when you do not understand what you read?*” The 80 students’ answers are the same. They chose (A); they coped with their reading problems with the help of dictionary and the 5 students chose (B); they answered when they do not know the meaning of a word, they ask someone especially, it may be their friend or a teacher. For the four optional questions, the students’ answers are not the same on each.

6.6. Analysis of Teachers’ Data

According to the language teachers’ feedbacks, conception of teaching reading and attitude toward their students’ ability were found out. The first interview question for the language teachers was “*Which methods or approaches did you use in your language classroom?*” Every teacher owns their personal teaching style. It cannot be the same on each. Most of the language teachers used either direct or bilingual approach or interactive communicative approach in their language classroom. The majority of teachers used the guided reading method and bilingual method to deliver the materials in teaching reading. For the second question, “*Are you satisfied with the reading skill of the students?*” The teacher assumed that they are not satisfied with their students. Most of the students neglect reading passages from their text because they accepted that although they tried to learn and understand the whole passage, the reading passage in their exam is unseen for them. Thus, they tried to use some techniques and persuade them to be interest. For the third question, “*What are the students’ attitudes towards learning*

English?” They answered that students have a positive outlook in learning English. For this question, “*Do you think enough time is allotted for teaching vocabulary and reading?*” All the teachers responded

that it is not enough to teach reading and vocabulary. The students need to practise more and more. Although the students seemed eager to learn the target language, they did not have much time to study it because of their specialised subjects. For the last question, “*How do you assess your students’ reading ability during the lecture time?*” They assessed their reading ability by using different ways depending on their lecture. They responded that they gave them assignments to enrich vocabulary as well as making discussion and guessing the meaning of a word concerning vocabulary from the passage.

6.7. Findings and Discussion

The findings were based on the questionnaire and interview about teaching and learning reading and vocabulary. According to the students’ answers to the research questions, they accepted that not only reading skill but also the enrichment of vocabulary are very important in their learning. The students love doing vocabulary activities instead of learning reading passages. And then, they expected to be trained to develop their vocabulary skill by making many activities. When they read a passage within the allowed time, they got nervous because of lack of vocabulary knowledge. When they did not know the words from the passages, they took a help of dictionary. Thus, they realised that they need to practise more and more to become the independent readers in their classroom. According to the teachers’ answers to the interview questions, all language teachers trained their students to improve students’ reading ability using bilingual method and guided reading method in their classroom. The teachers also guided them to improve not only their students’ reading skill but also vocabulary enrichment in their study time. During the lecturer time, the teachers assessed students’ reading ability by making discussion, asking questions and asking them to guess the meaning of a word concerning vocabulary from the passage that they have never seen before. As the role of the teacher plays as an important ideal person in their classroom, the language teacher should provide information on the nature of the reading skills and guidelines on how it can be improved regardless of the course they teach.

7. Conclusion

This research paper is intended to enhance reading comprehension and focuses on the vocabulary enrichment for the beginner learners. This paper can be useful for the language teachers who are responsible for conducting the course. As reading is the more complex skill, the students require different approaches to help their study. One of the main reasons to be a proficient reader is vocabulary enrichment. It is the important part of reading skill. Besides, all the language teachers hope their students to read easily without difficulty when they read the passage from the text. In teaching and learning process, language teachers should give a good guideline

and instruct the ways of learning, give a direction and information concerning reading comprehension to their students.

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