

## THE IMPORTANCE OF LEARNING VOCABULARY FOR ESL LEARNERS

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The article investigates the importance of learning vocabulary for ESL learners and the most important concerns of the foreign language learning.

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Humans as social beings, need to build relationship with one another. The tools for building their relationship is a language. English as an international language is a universal tool that helps humans to communicate, especially across nation. Therefore, learning English is important for particular people who must communicate with another foreign people in his/her daily life.

Learning vocabulary is one of the major most important concerns of the foreign language learning. Researching vocabulary was neglected by the researchers up to 1960s; however, recently it has gained the attention of a lot of researchers. Vocabulary learning demands the learners' competence in both theory and practice. Schmitt has explained that vocabulary learning is essential as it is a vital indication of language proficiency. Similarly, learning any foreign language is fundamentally associated with vocabulary knowledge, the shortage of vocabulary items obstructs the process of second language learning. In ESL learning without having adequate vocabulary knowledge, learners may not show the desired results in language learning process and its competence. In the view of Adam lack of vocabulary knowledge hinders the real communication of ESL learners to a great extent. Hence, it is predictable that undergraduate ESL learners should have the appropriate vocabulary knowledge. For the betterment of developing vocabulary learning, researchers have been making enormous efforts to locate the different aspects of learning vocabulary to aid ESL learners. Nunan, a leading researcher in the field of L2 vocabulary, asserts that learners have to use certain techniques and strategies for achieving certain proficiency of vocabulary knowledge. In the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) vocabulary development has fascinated the scholars to play their part where vocabulary growth is comparatively low. Cohen, argues that learners, language instructors and teachers, curriculum developers and language researchers all agree on the view that vocabulary learning is indispensable part of L2 learning. However, learners and teachers are uncertain about the best practices of learning vocabulary.

Vocabulary knowledge is relected as an essential consideration in teaching and learning any foreign language. The importance of vocabulary in learning foreign language has been identified by many ESL teachers and researchers. The fundamental purpose of a majority of ESL learners is to develop proficiency in communication in learning foreign language. Grasping vocabulary knowledge is not merely essential but it's a central area in learning and developing foreign language. Nation explains the importance of vocabulary

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language as “Vocabulary is not an end itself. A rich vocabulary makes the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing easier to perform . So, by mastering vocabulary learning one can concentrate fully on other advanced levels and features of developing foreign language learning more efficiently.

Vocabulary knowledge is often viewed as a critical tool for second language learners because a limited vocabulary in a second language impedes successful communication. Underscoring the importance of vocabulary acquisition, Schmitt emphasizes that “lexical knowledge is central to communicative competence and to the acquisition of a second language”. Nation further describes the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and language use as complementary: knowledge of vocabulary enables language use and, conversely, language use leads to an increase in vocabulary knowledge. The importance of vocabulary is demonstrated daily in and out the school. In classroom, the achieving students possess the most sufficient vocabulary. Researchers such as Laufer and Nation, Maximo, Read, Gu, Marion and others have realised that the acquisition of vocabulary is essential for successful second language use and plays an important role in the formation of complete spoken and written texts. In English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL) learning vocabulary items plays a vital role in all language skills (i.e. listening, speaking, reading, and writing). Rivers and Nunan, furthermore, argue that the acquisition of an adequate vocabulary is essential for successful second language use because without an extensive vocabulary, we will be unable to use the structures and functions we may have learned for comprehensible communication.

While commenting on the ESL learners’ competence in speaking and writing, language instructors frequently complain that the learners are lagging behind because of having an inadequate stock of vocabulary. Dong in “Beyond Reading: Vocabulary Expansion and Language Use Consolidation” points out, “Vocabulary is an important part of reading. Without sufficient vocabulary, readers may make a wild guess at the unknown words, but are unable to fully understand the reading texts, or just understand them vaguely, and many a time wrongly.” Besides, learners’ comprehensive ability is quite dependent on their knowledge about vocabulary. It is assumed that as much vocabulary as stock the learners possess, they will show that much confidence in handling the language. Though for Stevick “language is a social process and language arises in the life of individual through an ongoing exchange of meaning with significant others”, improving vocabulary is one of the objectives of ESL classes as this activity gradually helps the learners in achieving motivation, self-confidence and proficiency.

Research has shown that second language readers rely heavily on vocabulary knowledge and the lack of that knowledge is the main and the largest obstacle for L2 readers to overcome. In production, when we have a meaning or concept that we wish to express, we need to have a store of words from which we can select to express this meaning or concept. When students travel, they don’t carry grammar books, they carry dictionaries. Many researchers argue that vocabulary is one of the most important – if not the most important – components in learning a foreign language, and foreign language curricula must reflect this. Wilkins states that: “There is not much value in being able to produce grammatical sentences if one has not got the vocabulary that is needed to convey what one wishes to say ... While without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed”. Other scholars such as Richards and Krashen, as cited in Maximo state many reasons for devoting attention to vocabulary. “First, a large vocabulary is of course essential for mastery of a language. Second language acquirers know this; they carry dictionaries with them, not grammar books, and regularly report that the lack of vocabulary

is a major problem". On the other hand, vocabulary has been acknowledged as L2 learners' greatest single source of problems. This remark may possibly reflect that the open-endedness of a vocabulary system is perceived to be a

Furthermore, many learners see second language acquisition as essentially a matter of learning vocabulary and therefore they spend a great deal of time on memorizing lists of L2 words and rely on their bilingual dictionary as a basic communicative resource. As a result, language teachers and applied linguists now generally recognize the importance of vocabulary learning and are exploring ways of promoting it more effectively. Some of this research takes the form of investigation of strategies learners use specifically for vocabulary, which is our focus of attention.

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