



IMPROVING WORD POWER: ENHANCING VOCABULARY

S. Gomathy

Assistant Professor, AMET University, Chennai, Tamilnadu

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Abstract:

Across the country, the number of graduates passing out every year is high in number. In India, graduates are more in recent years compared to the days before 10 years. Especially, Engineering graduates are more. The percentage of employed ones is relatively low when compared to the students who have passed out. The reason is that the percentage of employable students is minimal. What is meant by employability? Employability depends on the candidate's knowledge and skill. What is knowledge and what is skill? Knowledge is the technical (mostly theoretical) one and skill is the practical one. Those who are knowledgeable in English but not in a position to express themselves in an interview will not be successful. That is, today most of the students pursue their basic education in English medium. Even with exposure to the medium of instruction which is English, they lack the skill of speaking in English. It is because of lack of English speaking atmosphere and lack of vocabulary to express their ideas correctly. Even though they know English- speaking and practicing in English is minimal. It is because of the system that prevails in our country. To complete the syllabus and make the students understand the subject matter, the teachers help the students by explaining in Tamil or vernacular language. As our exam based system needs syllabus completion it becomes unavoidable. As the students lack practice, communication skill which plays a major role in employment is lacking among graduates. For fluency, more words are needed. Good package of vocabulary is needed. It becomes a lacuna among the present generation. The study of this paper is on how to improve the word power of the students and make their communication effective? This paper focuses on vocabulary building.

Key Words: Employability, Knowledge, Skill, Communication Skill, Vocabulary Building, Exposure To Language, Interview, Fluency & Successful

Introduction:

Why Vocabulary Have to be Improved?

When students have good technical knowledge and while attending an interview if they are not in a position to answer the correct way, when their expression fails, it reflects badly. When they fail expressing themselves, their esteem is wounded and they feel defeated. Their purpose of study goes a waste. Today, whether it is their parents or students – their aim of education is to get a well paying job. They feel the job is the product they get for the fees they pay for education. Vocabulary building is an activity to be carried out with sincere effort. From childhood the students are studying in English medium. They become graduates. Even after getting their degree, they find it very difficult to speak fluently in English. This is because of lack of initiative in them. They feel relaxed when they converse in their mother tongue. They are in a comfort zone when they speak in their mother tongue. Since English is not our first language and we are foreigners speaking it, we have some problems in speaking it fluently. It can be eradicated easily.

Major Hurdles that Affect English Fluency:

- ✓ Lack of initiation / lack of self motivation
- ✓ Mother tongue influence
- ✓ Low self confidence
- ✓ Peer group influence
- ✓ Lack of vocabulary
- ✓ Fear of committing mistakes
- ✓ Shyness
- ✓ Lack of exposure to English speaking environment.

How to Overcome These Limitations?

It is an easy as well as a strenuous effort to make students speak in English. Many students fail to speak in English because of insufficient words they know. They don't know the right words to be used and hence avoid speaking in English. Lack of motivation, shyness, and fear of committing mistakes can be removed by motivation and building confidence in them. Mother tongue influence can be avoided by making them slowly try out with small talks for 1 minute. Major concern of building vocabulary is the problem many English teachers face today. Today's youth spend more time in socializing and use mobile phones for chatting and watching videos. They don't use it for watching educative videos or listen to speeches of great people. Only for relaxing and entertaining they use mobiles. Mobile phones are the greatest boon of the new technology which can help the students in language learning. Many apps are there for language learning. They can use it for

learning accent, new words and how to use it. New technologies are introduced as virtual learning using simulation as a tool. Using mobiles students can learn many languages including English.

To Enhance Vocabulary:

When there are more words ready to use then the students will feel confident of their own self and speak in English. For achieving this, active learning must take place. The students are to be committed with a goal of achieving fluency in English speaking. As a scholar doing Research in English Language Teaching, I tried this with my students. I made them learn at least three words per day. With the meaning the words are learnt including different forms of the word.

Eg: beauty –noun, beautiful –adjective, beautify –verb

Beauty – the quality of pleasing and giving happiness (meaning)

If the students have a goal and do it regularly, their list of known words will increase day by day. They have to maintain a notebook to write sentences of their own using the words learnt. They have to try using it in conversation also. If a person cannot use a word effectively and accurately in a sentence, it is not a part of his vocabulary. The person must try using it in conversations with friends or in writing to reinforce the learning and have it as his permanent word.

Word Puzzles and Word Games:

Word puzzles are an excellent source of increasing one's word knowledge because the puzzle creators will often need to resort to an array of unusual words to ensure that the words fit into their puzzles and that they are interesting for the puzzle doer. There are many varieties of vocabulary puzzles, including crosswords, find-a-word and hidden word puzzles. As well as strengthening your word knowledge, puzzles are also good for improving your critical thinking skills.

Using Accurate Adjectives and Precise Nouns:

The best writers and speakers aim for concision and accuracy. A more powerful word is a useful addition to your vocabulary if it reduces the number of words in a sentence. A word is also useful if it is more descriptive than the word or phrase it replaces. For example, many people's voices could be described as "pleasant". But someone with a very pleasant voice could be said to have a "mellifluous" voice. Making the students to make a book of synonyms / antonyms so that they can easily organize / learn the degree of "expression" of a particular word. For example, the word "destitute" sounds more intense than the word "poor".

Studying Vocabulary in Context:

Research shows that the majority of words are learnt from context. Learning in context of situations and sentences has significant benefits for all three aspects of vocabulary acquisition: learning, recalling and retention.

Use the Vocabulary Personal and Emotional:

We have probably heard stories told by our grandparents and parents who made us visualize and feel the emotions of the people in the story. In learning, personalizing and emotional attachment have valid impact. Making use of the words learnt in a personal conversation or to express our emotions help us a lot in vocabulary building. This reinforces recalling and retention of the word learnt.

Reading regularly and from a variety of sources will help in enhancing one's vocabulary. Newspaper reading is a very good habit which will enhance vocabulary building. The students must develop the habit of reading newspapers, story books and it helps in improving their word power. Suppose there is a news about the flight timing of a flight from India to Russia at 10PM on Monday and rescheduled as wee hours of Tuesday- the student will come across with a word wee hours. When he refers the dictionary, he learns that wee hours means early hours after 12PM on Monday and it is Tuesday early hours. Students who read books have more words to explain than students those who are not regular readers of books. Reading is an Old but gold method. Helping the student to read a passage and giving the contextual meaning of the new words will benefit the students a lot.

Public Speaking:

Helping the students speak on a given topic for 1-3 minutes will help in developing confidence and makes him comfortable. Repeated practice will render the needed result. This gives a platform for the student to express his views with his words newly learnt and what he already knows.

Conclusion:

When active measures are there, learning becomes easier and the students can gain more vocabulary. When there are ample words to express their thought, students are capable of expressing themselves successfully. Their communication is powerful. Their power talk wins jobs for them. In this world of Science and Technology, effective communication skills play a vital role. So it is mandatory for the youth of today to develop effective spoken skills with power words to create impact on what is exemplified. Assertive and persuasive talks are possible only with unlimited vocabularies.

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