Research Paper

Vocabulary Learning Strategies of Textile Engineering Students: An Investigation among the NITER Undergrads in Bangladesh

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Abstract

English language has taken the position of second language in a country like Bangladesh though no official announcement has been made yet, it was not in this position even two decades ago but with the increased demand of the competency in spoken language has given it the position it is holding right now. Through this study, the researcher found out the current strategies that the 100 undergraduates First year first semester textile engineering fresher students of National Institute of Textile Engineering and Research (NITER) in Bangladesh frequently use, here students are using different strategies to learn vocabulary. The method of collecting data was a survey run by the researcher and an instrument used in this survey study was a 25-item questionnaire that has been taken from Riankamol (2008) which are adapted from Schmitt's taxonomy for vocabulary learning strategies. The data has been analyzed upon using Microsoft Excel program. Various statistical techniques including frequency and percentage have been used to analyze and interpret the data. The result of the survey exposed a clear idea that among many strategies of learning vocabulary which strategies are frequently used by Bangladeshi undergraduate textile engineering fresher students' context. It has a clear impact on the higher studies of these students because in tertiary level education students in Bangladesh find out the lack of a rich word stock to speak English properly so if the teachers follow the result of this study before planning the lessons then possible outcome could be improved.

Keywords

Vocabulary learning strategies, undergraduate, textile engineering students, Bangladesh

1. Introduction

Wilkins (1972) asserts that "without grammar, very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary, nothing can be conveyed" (also cited in Training, 2013). According to McCarthy (1990), meaningful communication does not happen without words that can express the feelings of learners though the learners have proper knowledge of the rules of English grammar and they

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have mastered the proper sounds of that language. There is no doubt that learning vocabulary is an integral part of learning a language for communicative purpose. English language is no longer a language that's been used for writing purpose where proper knowledge of grammar will suffice; rather it has become the language of communication in academic sector of Bangladeshi students. Gnoinska (1998) shares a general view about learning vocabulary by the students, that they find vocabulary learning as a tedious job and hold their poor memory responsible for their failure; consequently they prefer incidental learning because of realizing individual learning boring (Arju, 2011: 60). Bangladesh failed to obtain a satisfactory competence in using English and their insufficient stock of vocabulary has been detected as one of the underlining reasons. In order to have a glimpse of the techniques and methods practised at present in teaching vocabulary, data collected from learners of different grades, teachers, learners' class work copies, university test papers etc. found that the problem lies in planning, presenting, practising and evaluation policies that are involved in teaching this micro skill.

2. Objective

This paper aims to provide us the ideas of the most frequently used strategies used by the undergraduates of first year first semester students of textile engineering department at National Institute of Textile Engineering and Research (NITER). The aim of the survey is to seek for the vocabulary learning strategies used by the undergraduate freshers of textile engineering students of National Institute of Textile Engineering and Research (NITER) at Dhaka in Bangladesh.

3. Literature Review

According to Meara (1980), vocabulary learning was a neglected aspect of language learning, because previously emphasis was given on grammar not on vocabulary as the written part of language was needed most but with time as this world has become a global village spoken language has become the pre requisite of success in both academic and professional life. Oxford and Scarcella (1994) added that "students are usually expected to learn vocabulary on their own without much guidance" as cited in Lessard-Clouston (1994). According to Oxford (1990), no doubt that the strategies of language learning is crucial and it becomes a duty for the language instructors to make the learners understand their own approaches of vocabulary acquisition, as cited in Lessard-Clouston, (1994). This paper actually deals with the Bengali medium students of higher secondary level so the points or discussion will be based on the study of that particular group. Wallace (2007) thinks that 'the greatest challenge inhibiting the ability of English-language learners (ELLs) to read at the appropriate grade level is perhaps a lack of sufficient vocabulary development'. Wallace's statement was found applicable for Bangladeshi students because in Bangladesh students lack the ability of speaking in English.

3.1. Definition of Vocabulary

Vocabulary is essential in EFL teaching and in Bangladesh it has long been acknowledged and certainly this statement proves the importance of vocabulary again according to Neuman & Dwyer (2009) that "words we must know to communicate effectively; words in speaking (expressive vocabulary) and words in listening (receptive vocabulary)" as cited in Alqahtani (2015). Hornby (1995) defines vocabulary as "the total number of words in a language; vocabulary is a list of words with their meanings "as cited in Alqahtani (2015).

3.2. Vocabulary of Learning Strategies

For the last few decades researchers defined language learning strategies (LLS) in many ways, language learning strategies are purposeful mental actions (sometimes accompanied by observable behaviors) used by a learner to regulate his or her second or foreign language (L2) learning

(Oxford, 1990). O'malley, O'Malley, & Chamot (1990) define LLS as "the special thoughts or behaviors that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information". According to (Rubin and Wenden, 1987), such strategy is "identifying what good language learners report they do to learn a second or foreign language, or, in some cases, are observed doing while learning a second or foreign language" (Hismanoglu, 2000).

4. Methodology

The subjects in this study were 100 freshers-undergrads of textile engineering who studies in National Institute of Textile Engineering and Research (NITER), Nayarhat, Savar, Dhaka, Bangladesh. These students have come to complete their graduation after learning English as a subject for 12 years. The students were considered to have knowledge enough to answer the survey question that will decide the strategies they use. The method employed to collect data in this study was a survey run by the researcher using a 25-item questionnaire based on Schmitt's Taxonomy as cited in Rinakamol (2008). There are 25 strategies under six major groups of strategies, they are, Determination Strategy, Social Strategy of (Discovery), Social Strategy of (Consolidation), Memory Strategy, Cognitive Strategy, Metacognitive Strategy. The data has been analysed upon using Microsoft Excel program. Various statistical techniques including frequency and percentage have been used to analyse and interpret the data

Scales were used to indicate the frequency of the usage of each strategy:

0 = never use it; 1 = seldom use it; 2 = sometimes use it; 3 = often use it; 4 = always use it

5. Results and Findings

Table-1: Percentage of Overall Strategies Use

Strategy Category	Mean ($\bar{X}$)
Determination	2.30
Social (Discovery)	2.41
Social (Consolidation)	2.18
Memory	2.13
Cognitive	2.01
Metacognitive	2.16

The results of Table-1 show that among the six categories, the respondents most frequently used Social (Discovery) strategies at the highest mean score (2.41) and the least used strategies were cognitive strategies with the lowest mean score (2.01).

Table-2: Frequency, percentage and mean of Determination strategies by items

The Statement of Vocabulary Learning Strategies	Degree of frequency										Mean ($\bar{X}$)
	Always use it		Often use it		Sometimes use it		Seldom use it		Never use it		
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
I use a bilingual dictionary to help me translate English words into Bangla language.	34	34	24	24	36	36	3	3	3	3	2.83
I use pictures illustrated in the textbook to find the word meanings.	5	5	15	15	30	30	30	30	20	20	1.55
I learn meaning of words by identifying its part of speech.	30	30	19	19	35	35	7	7	9	9	2.54

Table-2 shows that students use a bilingual dictionary to help them translate English words into Bangla language as the most frequently used determination strategy (2.83) and the least used

determination strategy is using pictures illustrated in the textbook to find the word meanings (1.55).

Table-3: Frequency, percentage and mean of social strategies of (discovery) by items

The Statement of Vocabulary Learning Strategies	Degree of frequency										Mean ($\bar{X}$)
	Always use it		Often use it		Sometimes use it		Seldom use it		Never use it		
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
I ask the teacher to translate the words into Bangla.	9	9	27	27	32	32	23	23	9	9	2.04
I ask the teacher to put an unknown word into a sentence to help me understand the word meaning.	20	20	13	13	37	37	15	15	15	15	2.08
I ask my classmate for meaning.	20	20	30	30	35	35	10	10	5	5	2.5
I learn some new words when working in group works.	45	45	25	25	20	20	9	9	1	1	3.04

About Social Strategies of (Discovery) Table-3 shows that students learn some new words when working in group works frequently (3.04) and it is the most frequently used strategy. The least used Social Strategies of (Discovery) is asking the teacher to translate the words into Bangla (2.04).

Table-4: Frequency, percentage and mean of Social strategies of (Consolidation) by items

The Statement of Vocabulary Learning Strategies	Degree of frequency										Mean ($\bar{X}$)
	Always use it		Often use it		Sometimes use it		Seldom use it		Never use it		
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
I practice English in group work activities.	31	31	15	15	30	30	15	15	9	9	2.44
I ask native speakers for help.	10	10	18	18	30	30	21	21	21	21	1.75
I learn words about the culture of English-speaking countries.	20	20	30	30	27	27	13	13	10	10	2.37

Table-4 shows practicing English in group activities is the frequently used Social strategy (2.44) of (Consolidation). The least used strategy is asking native speakers for help (1.75).

Table-5: Frequency, percentage and mean of Memory strategies by items

The Statement of Vocabulary Learning Strategies	Degree of frequency										Mean ($\bar{X}$)
	Always use it		Often use it		Sometimes use it		Seldom use it		Never use it		
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
I write a new word in a sentence so I can remember it.	37	37	27	27	23	23	8	8	5	5	2.83
I study a spelling of new words.	10	10	3	3	39	39	23	23	25	25	1.5
I use physical actions when learning words.	30	30	20	20	20	20	10	10	20	20	2.3
I speak words out loud when studying.	25	25	17	17	32	32	2	2	24	24	1.92

Regarding Memory strategies Table-5 reveals that the most frequently used strategy is writing a new word in a sentence to remember it (2.83). The least used Memory strategy is studying a spelling of new words (1.5).

Table-6: Frequency, percentage and mean of Cognitive strategies by items

The Statement of Vocabulary Learning Strategies	Degree of frequency										Mean (X̄)
	Always use it		Often use it		Sometimes use it		Seldom use it		Never use it		
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
I repeatedly practice new words.	30	30	30	30	22	22	12	12	6	6	2.66
I write a new word on a flash card so I can remember it.	11	11	12	12	42	42	15	15	20	20	1.79
I learn words by listening to vocabulary CDs.	10	10	15	15	25	25	16	16	34	34	1.51
I record vocabulary from English soundtrack movies in my notebook	16	16	8	8	32	32	21	21	23	23	1.73
When I try to remember a word, I write or say it repeatedly.	53	53	13	13	22	22	7	7	5	5	3.02
I make vocabulary cards and take them with me wherever I go.	11	11	13	13	17	17	17	17	42	42	1.34

Table-6 reveals that trying to remember a word by repeatedly uttering it as the most frequently used strategy (3.02) and the least used strategy is making vocabulary cards and take them with them wherever they go (1.34).

Table 7: Frequency, percentage and mean of Metacognitive strategies by items

The Statement of Vocabulary Learning Strategies	Degree of frequency										Mean (X̄)
	Always use it		Often use it		Sometimes use it		Seldom use it		Never use it		
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
I listen to English songs and news.	47	47	25	25	20	20	8	8	0	0	3.11
I memorize word from English magazines.	15	15	21	21	27	27	22	22	15	15	1.99
I review my own English vocabulary cards for reviewing before the next lesson starts	13	13	15	15	35	35	16	16	21	21	1.83
I am not worry very much about the difficult words found when reading or listening, I pass them.	15	15	18	18	28	28	15	15	24	24	1.85
I use on-line exercise to test my vocabulary knowledge.	18	18	14	14	40	40	10	10	18	18	2.04

Table-7 shows that the most frequently used Metacognitive strategy is listening to English songs and news (3.11) and the least used Metacognitive strategy is reviewing their own English vocabulary cards for reviewing before the next lesson starts (1.83)

6. Discussion

This section shows what are the most frequently used vocabulary learning strategies by freshers undergrads of textile engineering in National Institute of Textile Engineering and Research (NITER).In this study it has been illustrated in Table-3 that among determination strategies (2.30) the most frequent used strategy is that they use a bilingual dictionary to help them translate English words into Bangla language (2.83) and according to Schmitt and McCarthy (1997) from school to university level the most frequently used determination strategy is the above one. This study has similarities with Chalida (2011).

In case of social strategies of Discovery (2.41) as shown in Table-4 the most popularly used strategy is learning some new words when working in group works (3.04). They like practicing

English in group work activities (2.44). This finding has similarities with the findings of Rinakamol (2008) who illustrated that students learn new words while working in group works. Social strategies of Consolidation (2.18) as shown in Table-5 refer the strategy of practicing English in group work activities (2.44) is the frequently used strategy. Unlike Rinakamol (2008) who reveals that the most frequently used social strategy of consolidation by his respondents is learning words about the culture of English-speaking countries. Among the strategies of Memory (2.13) shown in Table-6 the most frequently used strategy is writing new word in sentences so that they can remember it (2.83) which is contrary to the findings of Rinakamol (2008) where respondents use physical actions when learning words. These two groups of respondents were quite contrary in their manner of learning one group choose physical activities and the other choose writing activity. Among the cognitive strategies (2.01) students frequently used to remember a word by writing or saying it repeatedly (3.02) as shown in Table-7 and this finding corresponds with the findings of Rinakamol (2008) and both group of respondents try to remember a word, by writing or saying it repeatedly. Most popular Metacognitive strategy (2.16) used by these freshers is listening to English songs and news (3.11) as shown in Table -8 and this finding corresponds with the findings of Rinakamol (2008).

Among the above six groups of strategies the social strategies of (Discovery) has the highest mean (2.41) as mentioned in Table-2, it is not similar to some other studies investigating the vocabulary learning strategies of different levels of students, for example- 'A close examination of the results of the study reveals that English gifted students at Triam Udomsuksa School use the "Metacognitive strategies" for learning the new word's meaning most frequently. Metacognitive strategies facilitate learning with many English sources and it can interest and motivate learners. Some example of these strategies are listening to English songs and news, and memorizing words from English magazines.' (Riankamol 2008, p.31) while that English gifted students at Triam Udomsuksa School in Thailand frequently use the Metacognitive strategies but in Bangladesh the undergraduate 1st year Textile engineering students like the Social strategies of (Discovery) and among the four strategies of discovery they frequently use learning some new words when working in group works (3.04). In Thailand these Social strategies of (Discovery) has the lowest mean score but in Bangladesh in the context mentioned above has got the highest mean (2.41) in Social strategies of (Discovery). These Discovery strategies actually helps the learners understand the culture of that particular language they are learning. Among the subjects of this research the influence of social strategies (Discovery and Consolidation) was more than other strategies which also different from the context of Triam Udomsuksa School, Thailand. Among all the strategies the most frequently used strategies are listening to English songs and news (3.11) followed by learning some new words when working in group works (3.04) and trying to remember a word by writing or saying it repeatedly (3.02).Here the strategies adopted by the students proves that they are very willing to learn individually and group based activities and mostly without the help of their teachers, as they are from tertiary level so they know how to practice and how to learn so the required role that the teacher needs to play is motivating them to learn vocabulary in a serious manner (Thornbury, 2002). It is very clear from the above data that these engineering students are comfortable in group works and have their individual strategies in in taking any input and then making it permanent.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be said that "social strategies of (discovery)" are most frequently used strategies by the above group of students. Though the sample size is small (100), and the students in the sample were mainly from Dhaka and they are only engineering students but they seem to enjoy learning English from real experiences, by listening to English songs, watching English

movies and so on, other than inside the classroom and they prefer group activities to learn something other than individual learning.

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