

CONTEXTUAL READING FOR VOCABULARY ENHANCEMENT

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Abstract

Enhancement of vocabulary in the learning process of any language is entirely a matter of interest. There are methods recommended by language experts to increase vocabulary in one's stock. Such methods very often prove futile not because of any deficiency in them but as a result of the inconsistent adherence to practising the methods. Every method has its own prescription for improving the power of vocabulary. But, its effectiveness lies in the application of the words learned from the method. In all the methods, there are two conditions imperative for the word power of the language. One is the frequent experience of the words recently learned and their different usages from various sources in the learning process. Another is the frequency of using the words recently learned in the day-to-day conversations one gets into. The usage may be either appropriate or intentional. The efforts initially made prove more effective than later. This paper focuses on how to incorporate the first condition in the newspaper reading for effective enhancement of one's language systematically.

Keywords: Contextual reading, segmental approach, self-motivation, matter of interest.

Introduction

Enhancement of vocabulary in the process of learning any language is entirely a matter of interest. There are methods recommended by language experts to increase vocabulary in one's stock. Such methods very often prove futile not because of any deficiency in them but due to the inconsistent adherence to practising the methods. Every method has its own prescription for improving the power of vocabulary. But its effectiveness lies in the application of the words learned from the method.

In all the methods, there are two conditions imperative to improve the word power of the language. One is the frequent experience of the words recently learned and their different usages from various sources during the learning process. For example, the

words learned recently, if chanced upon repeatedly from some other sources in different contexts, can be easily and permanently registered. Another is the frequency of using the words recently learned in the day-to-day conversations one gets into. The application may be either appropriate or intentional. The efforts initially made prove more effective than later.

However, one's interest is a key role in improving the power of his or her language. The area of choice one has to make should be something that comes out of passion. When it comes to passion, one may go out of the way and move towards the subject of interest that captivates him or her whole-heartedly. Many language experts agree that self-motivation is an essential factor to improve a language. Motivation of the self lies in one's hand and is strengthened significantly by the amount of interest one has in the subject he is involved.

One choice the learners of any second language make very often is reading the newspaper of that language. A survey says that in India there are at least 5,000 words frequently used in the English newspapers of renown such as Indian Express, The Hindu and Times of India. Out of which, 3,000 words are found almost every day. Thus, if the second language learner in English of the country accustoms oneself to consistent reading of a particular newspaper for at least six months, he or she can add more than 3,000 words to one's vocabulary stock.

Anyhow, one's approach should be systematic in the newspaper-reading. Everyone has one's own method for the language enrichment. A segmental approach is the one which is suitable in the beginning that the learner can be one-pointed and clear of what he is learning. That is to say, he should be selective in reading the news stories of the daily. The newspaper generally consists of varieties of stories under many headings such as court, crime, sports, politics...etc. While many youngsters are interested in reading the sports stories, some are inclined towards reading the political stories. Some readers love reading the local stuff.

However, the essential condition for the beginner is that he has to read the stories under the same heading for quite a longer time to keep the words learned recently registered permanently. More than this, he should not fail reading the follow-ups of the same story if there is any. This will be very much of use as the follow-ups normally reuse the same words in different structures and at sometimes in the same contexts or in the different contexts of the same story. If the author of the story is the same, then there is a strong possibility that the same words will be repeated, if not, at least the derivatives of the words in the narration of the story.

If context is a matter of interest for the learner, then vocabulary enhancement will become an easy deal. When the matter of interest has a strong association with somebody or something, such contextual association leads to the deep register of the word in one's permanent stock of vocabulary.

Let us assume that a learner, who belongs to Tamil Nadu, is in the habit of reading the political stories of the State emotionally. His emotionality and sentimentality are due to his adherent attachment for the Dravidian parties of the State. The State was in fact in delirium and fever from the end of the year 2016 and to the first two months of 2017 owing to the political turmoil. All had started with the unexpected expiry of Chief Minister J.Jayalalitha of Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (ADMK). The departure of the party leader had left a big vacuum in the party and had left the entire political situation of the State in a mess. Everyone was trying to stage an orchestrated drama of his or her own. The reading of the newspaper at the times was an interesting affair as no one's move at the crucial juncture was predictable. The reader who is an intense pursuer in updating the political trends of the State can not only become a good critic with deep insights but also a wonderful learner in improving his word power without putting in striving efforts

Example 1:

Sentence: The outgoing Chief Minister O.Panneerselvam was just another advancing **pawn** set up for being moved off the board en passant.

Word: Pawn

Meaning: Person whose actions are controlled by others.

Explanation: The context appears in "The Hindu" dated February 7, 2017. 'Pawn' is the word that can be associated with the character of O.Panneerselvam if the learner is a voracious political reader of the State over the last three months. Such a reader can easily relate the word with the nature of any such character in life.

Example 2:

Sentence: Sasikala, known for her backroom **manoeuvres**, first stage - managed her election as the AIADMK general secretary and now as the Legislative party leader.

Word: Manoeuvres

Meaning: Deceptively skillful plans

Explanation: The context appears in "The Hindu" dated February 9, 2017. The word is not an easy one to be added to one's stock of vocabulary if it is not rightly associated. A good reader can easily sense Sasikala, a close friend of Jayalalitha, the late Chief Minister of the State, and her backroom manoeuvres since many of her backroom manoeuvres were the talk of the State in the affairs of the State. The word's association with Sasikala is thus an easy reminder of its contextual application.

Example 3: The cloak of **invincibility** that Jayalalitha seemed to have on her during even the most testing times was not Sasikala's to wear.

Word: Invincibility

Meaning: Incapable of being defeated

Explanation: The context appears in “The Hindu” dated February 9, 2017. The word ‘invincibility’ is added to one’s stock of vocabulary if it is related with late Chief Minister of the State J.Jayalalitha. Even any subject of the state has a casual reference to Jayalalitha with her so-called invincible nature.

Example 4: O.Paneerselvam’s revolt has touched a chord with the rank and file

Word: Touch a chord

Meaning: Evoke a response

Explanation: ‘Touch a chord’ is an idiomatic phrase frequently used in the political stories. O.Panneerselvam’s revolt was enacted at the right moment that the phrase was appropriate in the context. The context is an easy reminder to add the word in one’s vocabulary stock.

When a same word is referred to two different contexts with the same meaning, then registering the word and its meaning in one’s memory is an easy deal. However, the learner should have some predilection for at least one of the areas in which any one of the contexts is being referred to. When the learner chances upon another area in which the same word is used, what he needs is the process of correlation just to make out the suitability of the word in the second context. Comprehension of the usage of the word in its association with the second context could strengthen its impression in one’s memory with little efforts.

Word: Incarceration

Example 1: The politicians in high places often pay their way through legal battles and spend little time in incarceration.

Example 2: A Delhi’s court’s acquittal of two persons accused of involvement in the 2005 serial blast in the city brings to an end to their long incarceration.

Context 1: The context is referred to in the editorial page of “The Hindu” dated February 15, 2017. This editorial page titled “The conviction and after” expresses its views about the Supreme Court Judgment on the disproportionate case in which former Chief Minister J.Jayalalitha and her friend Sasikala were accused of. The sentence appears in the beginning of the editorial column with a general comment on the politicians in high places in recent times. That the context’s hint at Sasikala’s back room manoeuvres to strike a claim to head the government and her attempt to make an escape from punishment or to enjoy judicial leniency is quite obvious when it is making a general comment on the present-day politicians.

Context 2: This context is referred to in the editorial page of “The Hindu” dated February 21, 2017 with the title “Guilty until”. The editorial column views the Delhi’s court’s acquittal of two persons accused of involvement in the 2005 serial blast. It states the judgment is a telling commentary on India’s faulty counter-terror posture. It is questioning the integrity of the investigation procedure that has fallen flat in a court of

law and demanding what compensation can be provided for the unjust and long incarceration.

Word: Poise

Example 1: Grace and poise in the face of imminent defeat is a rare political virtue.

Example 2: RBIs shift of its policy poise.

Context 1: This context is referred to in the editorial page of "The Hindu" dated February 18, 2017 with the title "Marred by violence". It views the behavior of the MLAs of DMK (Dravida Munnetra Kazhgam), an abysmal low. As the ruling party had more than what it was needed for the majority during the trust vote, Stalin, the leader of DMK and the leader of the opposite party in the State Legislative Assembly, and his party members' behavior was showing political immaturity without having any concern over the instability of the State in political affairs.

Context 2: This context is referred to in the editorial page of "The Hindu" dated February 10, 2017 with the title "Prudence and Uncertainty". It focuses on RBS's recent policy shift.

Thus, contextual association is one of the best method in the newspaper reading, which fulfills the essential need for the initial repetition of the words recently learned and their different applications in various contexts so as to get them and their impressions permanently registered in the reader's memory. Thus, what is needed is a constant and consistent reading with interest. The rest follows without much effort.

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