Teaching and learning ESP vocabulary

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ABSTRACT

Vocabulary learning and teaching is very important in learning English; nevertheless, vocabulary was a neglected area in foreign language teaching for a number of years. In order to develop students' communicative competence, language teachers should encourage them to learn as many words as possible. English for specific purposes course (ESP) are new trend in English Language Teaching and they include technical English, scientific English, English for medical professionals, English for waiters, and English for tourism. There are different opinions about teaching ESP courses but vocabulary is crucial in this sphere of teaching. Therefore, this paper attempts to add to existing studies on the use of vocabulary learning strategies in learning vocabulary in ESP. The students should become aware of the importance of language learning strategies and get trained to use them appropriately.

Key words: English language learning and teaching, vocabulary learning, vocabulary teaching, vocabulary learning strategies, ESP.

1. Introduction

Teaching vocabulary especially in ESP courses is becoming a challenge for English Language Teachers. Vocabulary is an inseparable part of any teaching syllabus and vocabulary should be taught in a well-planned and regular basis. It is essential to carefully decide what vocabulary will be selected for teaching, and what approach or activities will be used to teach it to the students.

Traditional foreign languages like Russian and French are losing their practical use in education in the Republic of Macedonia and English is becoming the primary foreign language. English has been taught in primary schools from the third grade for several years. However, starting from last 2007, it is a required subject from the first grade where the students attend two classes a week. The traditional textbooks have been changed and the students are provided with more modern books that include pictures and focus on language skills. The same situation exists in high schools where the students attend two to four English classes a week. However, the number of students in classes is 30-40 and this is still an issue that should be resolved in the near future.

English teachers are being trained in using modern methods of English teaching and attend local and international conferences. Old teaching methods are rapidly being replaced with modern ones. The teachers at Universities in the country design curricula based on the students' needs and interests. Vocabulary learning is a very important part of the curricula at South East European University (SEEU) and the students who study here need to learn English for

different purposes: to deal with the foreign business partners in their jobs, to know it for their studies, to travel abroad to meet other cultures or on holiday, to read literature in English, etc.

2. Learning ESP vocabulary

SEEU has five faculties, Business Administration, Public Administration, Law, Communication and Computer Sciences, and Teacher Training which offer both undergraduate and postgraduate studies. Students enrolled at this University can take an English course, that is either general or ESP courses. From my teaching experience I can say that students face difficulties while learning new English words. It is difficult to learn words especially ESP words because they are low-frequency words and are not encountered very often.

Vocabulary acquisition is incremental in nature and this means that words are not learned instantaneously but they are learned over a period of time. The number of words learned depends on numerous exposures to a particular word. McCarthy (1990, p. viii) points out that "No matter how well the student learns grammar, no matter how successfully the sounds of L2 are mastered, without words to express a wider range of meanings, communication in an L2 just cannot happen in any meaningful way" (McCarthy 1990, p. viii).

Schmitt (2000, p. 131) emphasizes that "the object of vocabulary learning is to transfer lexical information from short-term memory, where it resides during the process of manipulating language, to permanent long-term memory".

Short-term memory is also called working memory. Working memory is a kind of gateway where the information is transferred to long-memory. Working memory is linked to human consciousness and its characteristic is that it holds a limited amount of information for a limited amount of time. The role of the working memory in this case is to extract visuals, for example, that are relevant for ongoing comprehension but the capacity of the working memory is always limited.

Long-term memory serves as the storage area of information. The amount of information that people hold there is not known but the information can be stored for a long period of time. However, instead of words being represented

alphabetically, concepts are represented according to their associations to one another. An example is the word "blue" and what usually comes to mind is the sky which is closely associated with blue or "red" usually associated with love.

Driscol (2005) gives a detailed explanation of each: episodic memory refers to specific events such as in specific events as remembering the circumstances of how one learns to read a map. Whereas semantic memory refers to all the general information stored in memory and recalled independently of how one has learned the information. The circumstances under which reading a map was learned are not memorable but the skill is remembered. The long-term and working memories are also important in producing speech where the material is accessed and assembled from the long-term memory.

Learning concrete words is easier than learning abstract words. Learners can more easily remember words like: *peach*, *house,* and *horse* if they appear on a list than words such as *freedom* and *injustice*. The reason is that the verbal system represents the meaning of the words, but the imaginal system represents images of the words. The concrete words are remembered better with two memories available at recall, as opposed to one for abstract words (Driscol, 2005).

A recent trend in higher education is ESP (English for Specific Purposes) courses. These courses are designed around students' needs based on their field of study. The goal is to strengthen students' proficiency and help them to get ready to cope with everyday situations and deal with professionals in many fields such as: engineering, medicine, education, IT, etc. There are many training sessions organized by international experts whose goal is to train local teachers to teach these courses successfully.

In order to develop an ability to learn new vocabulary, for both general English and technical vocabulary in learning ESP (English for Specific Purposes), the students should become aware of the importance of language learning strategies and be trained to use them appropriately. The teachers put a lot of effort toward helping them to learn vocabulary related to their field of study.

It is widely believed that reading is the major source of vocabulary growth in L1. Students with strong reading skills who read a variety of texts may realize substantial gains in their vocabulary without direct instruction. These students may also realize some incidental vocabulary gains through independent reading, however. Teachers should neither ignore nor rely solely upon incidental

acquisition but rather seek to enhance its effectiveness with vocabulary logs, word walls and other techniques. Words occur in written texts in four different categories distinguished by Nation (2001):

1) High-Frequency words including many content words, e.g., *government, forests, production, adoption, represent, boundary;*

2) Academic words include many words that are common in various kinds of academic texts, e.g., *policy, phase, sustained*

3) Technical words are closely related to the topic and subject area (words from the field of agriculture) in the text, e.g., *indigenous, beech, podocarp, regeneration*, *rimu, timber;*

4) Low-Frequency words include words like *pastoral, aired, perpetuity, zone.*

3. Teaching ESP vocabulary

Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) are of the opinion that ESP teachers should not teach technical vocabulary but should check if the learners understood technical vocabulary that appears as carrier content for an exercise. I believe that ESP teachers should teach words. I agree with Strevens (1973) who points out that "learners who know scientific field may have little difficulty with technical words; but a teacher who doesn't may have a great deal". A suitable approach for teaching ESP words is the lexical approach. The lexical approach follows the principle that lexis is the most important part of any language and should be treated that way. Chunks are used in communication a lot especially by L2 learners as they strive to meet their basic communicative needs. L2 learners sometimes try to be creative and combine one part of the lexical phrase with another word in order to produce a better utterance.

Chunks are also very important in learning ESP because the learners should be able to identify them and should be aware of them. The usage of lexical chunks helps students write and communicate better and they should be able to distinguish high-frequency and low-frequency lexical items. It is also widely believed that language fluency and accuracy is achieved largely by retrieving and combining ready-made chunks of language (Kavaliauskienë and Janulevièienë, 2000).

Most of the students taking ESP identify it with specific terminology related to their field of study. There are degrees of technicality depending on how restricted a word is to a particular area (Nation, 2001, p. 198). ESP is seen as an approach rather than a product, by which is meant that ESP does not involve a particular kind of language, teaching material or methodology. So, ESP relates to the learners, the language required and the learning context, and thus establishes the primacy of need. Need is defined by the reasons for which the student is learning English (Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998).

Nation claims that "technical vocabulary" is a type of specialized vocabulary and its occurrence is affected by factors that influence the use of all vocabulary. Language teachers should prepare their learners to deal with the large numbers of technical words that occur in specialized texts (Nation, 2001). It is my opinion that language teachers who teach ESP courses should be familiar with the core vocabulary of the field of study and design curricula that integrate both content area and English language. Dudley Evans and St John (1998) distinguish two types of ESP vocabulary, general vocabulary with higher frequency or with specific meaning in a particular field (Table 1).

Type of vocabulary	Examples
General vocabulary that has a higher frequency in a specific field	*Academic*: factor, method, function, occur, cycle *Tourism*: accept, advice, agree
General English words that have a specific meaning in certain disciplines	bug in *computer science*; force, acceleration and energy in *physics*; stress and strain in *mechanics and engineering, etc.*

Table 1. The types of vocabulary
adapted from Dudley-Evans and St John. (1998, p. 83)

Dudley Evans and St John (1998) are of the opinion that teaching ESP vocabulary is the same as teaching English for General Purposes. The only distinction that should be made is between the vocabulary for comprehension and the vocabulary for production. There are also other distinctions: grammatical vs lexical words, cognates vs non-cognates, etc. They further suggest using cognates to deal with technical vocabulary:

Kavaliauskienë and Janulevièiene (2000) suggest that the lexical approach is very useful in teaching ESP. Most learners equate 'vocabulary' with 'words', and there is a tendency among learners to translate any professional text word-for-word, i.e. they usually try to simplify most lexical phrases to separate words. The role of teachers is to raise students' awareness of the existence of larger lexical items.

It is believed that ESP combines subject matter and English language teaching. This approach can be highly motivating for students because students are able to apply what they learn in their English classes to their main field of study, whether it be law, computing, business, tourism, etc. Being able to use the vocabulary and structures that they learn in a meaningful context reinforces what is taught and increases their motivation. Nevertheless, ESP concentrates more on language in context than on teaching grammar and language structures.

Another interesting fact is that ESP words are perceived as more complex than general words and they should spend more time learning them. This is probably due to the fact that collocations are very frequent in ESP and combining them correctly requires more effort. There are specific types of collocations in ESP which cause students' errors due to a lack of translational equivalence between the students' first language and the second language. Teachers must help the learner become familiar with ESP collocations, and such familiarity will develop best when the learner is consciously aware of this tendency of words to go together (Lewis, 1993).

Morgan and Rinvolucri (2004) believe that the new words are not learned mechanically, but associatively. Sysoyev (2000) points out that "Vygotsky introduced the notion of a mediator - a person who helps students achieve what they cannot do by themselves. In teaching ESP, the role of mediator will be placed on the teacher, who will start from students' current stage and bring them to the next stage of their needs". The challenge for teachers is to systematize the vocabulary in English. Developments in technology will help us in collecting and

analyzing current and specialized corpora (ESP), and both spoken and academic English in order to develop better descriptions of lexical phrases and collocations (Sökmen, 1997).

Language learning strategies can support all aspects of language learning therefore the teachers should encourage students to use different strategies to learn ESP and general English words. Many strategies are non-observable but students and teachers can discuss them or design questionnaires to find more information and make more use of it. Researchers and scholars should put more effort into designing tools that could provide more information on the usage of non-observable strategies.

Nation (1997) was among the first researchers who developed vocabulary learning strategies and he points out that vocabulary learning strategies should involve choice, i.e., there are several strategies to choose from; be complex, i.e., there are several steps to learn; require knowledge and benefit from training; increase the efficiency of vocabulary learning and vocabulary use. Therefore some of the possible vocabulary learning strategies that can be used in teaching ESP vocabulary are the following: synonyms/ antonyms, learning words by categories, by topic, by word families and also vocabulary cards.

Let us consider which language learning strategies learners in the South East European University use to find out the meaning of unknown words presented in the text.

> *The Antarctic is the most remote continent and the last to be discovered. It is the only continent without an indigenous human population. In the past it had a warm climate, supporting luxuriant vegetation and large animals, but the climate deteriorated over the last 30 million years, once the great continent Gondwana had drifted apart.*
>
> *This region is the earth's major heat sink and contains ninety per cent of the world's ice and nearly three-quarters of its fresh water. Only two percent of the continent is not covered by ice, and life retains a tenuous foothold there.*
>
> *Nearly half of Antarctica's coastline is hidden by thick floating ice shelves or glaciers, and the rest is surrounded by icebergs down to depth of 15 meters or more, which limits coastal life.*

The task was for the participants to underline the unknown words that appeared in the text. According to the level of the difficulty, I predicted which words the students would underline and therefore I provided sentences out of context which they had a chance to refer to.

The procedure involved eight students who are studying at SEEU at different departments, Business Administration, Law, Public Administration, Computer Sciences and Language Cultures and Communications. The participants' age ranged from 20 to 24 and they each had a different level of language proficiency. The participants were given one week to try and learn the words. They were asked to note down and then retrospect on the discovery strategies they used to find out the meaning of the unknown words.

Whenever the participants fell into silence, I prompted them by asking questions such as: How will you discover the meaning of this word? Can you guess the meaning of that word from the context?, I see you are shaking your head, why are you doing that? The whole process of vocabulary learning starting from identifying a problem word in the reading passage to the recall of the word was recorded with the participants' permission.

The results of the study showed that these university learners use different strategies for discovering the meaning of the unknown words. It was found that some learners used two or more different strategies for discovering the meaning of one unknown word. The four most frequently used strategies were: Discovery strategies– guessing from the context, asking the teacher, monolingual dictionary and analyzing parts of speech.

Discovery strategies	Number of strategies used to discover the meaning of words by all 8 learners
1. Guessing from the context	22
2. Asking a teacher	20
3. Monolingual Dictionary	10
4. Analyzing part of speech	10

Table 2. Ranking of the strategies in think –aloud tasks

The data drawn from the protocol showed that the study participants made successful guesses using: contextual cues (both syntactic and semantic), word features, general word knowledge and intrinsic cues.

3.1. Contextual Cues (Syntactic and Semantic)

Excerpt 1

> *P1: The Antarctic is the most* remote *continent. ...REMOTE, this is something related to the Antarctic. The most is superlative of an adjective. This must be something far away or distant. Yes, I am sure it is distant because the Antarctic is the most distant continent and I know where it is.*

Obviously the participant made the correct guess using the immediate context and the base for inference was the Antarctic, *The Antarctic is the most .... continent and the last to be discovered.* The participant was familiar with the meaning of other words therefore she arrived easily at a compatible meaning.

This participant from the intermediate level group figured out that "*remote*" is something related to Antarctic and took into account the surrounding context. She also analyzed the superlative form of the adjective "*the most*", i.e. analyzed the part of speech and made a successful guess. She also used world knowledge: *the Antarctic is the most distant continent* – I know where it is. It is obvious that the combination of context, syntactic form of the adjective and world knowledge led to a successful guess. Participant 2, on the other hand, guessed the meaning of the word "*tenuous*" based on the context and figured out the meaning of the word very quickly.

Excerpt 2

> *P2: I will read the sentence and try to guess the meaning. Only two percent of the continent is not covered by ice, and life retains a* tenuous *foothold there. Uhh.. there I have difficulty because I don't understand foothold either. But, I will use two other context sentences: The Russo-French alliance proved* tenuous *and collapsed altogether in 1812. The star now consists of a dense,* tenuous *envelope of relatively cool gas. I will see now...tenuous and collapsed...this must mean something that cannot survive for a long time or...this must mean something not very strong ...or ..weak. Yes, it means weak.*

Based on the retrospection data, the word collapsed given in context sentences was probably the cue for the successful guess. Obviously participant 2 failed to guess the meaning of the word "tenuous" at first because there was another unknown word in the context. Laufer (1997, p. 28) explains that "if the clues to the unknown word happen to be in words that are themselves unfamiliar to the reader, then, as far as the reader is concerned, the clues do not exist since they simply cannot be used". The participant guessed the meaning of the word "tenuous" using contextual clues in three different contexts. Likewise, participant 4 also analyzed different contexts and successfully guessed the meaning of the phrase "drifted apart".

Excerpt 3

> *P4: Ok, now I will read the whole sentence "but the climate deteriorated over the last 30 million years, once the great continent Gondwana had* drifted apart." *I am sure that I have seen this word but I can't remember the meaning. Where have I seen it? I am trying to remember any context where this word is used. Or, I will check the two other sentences.*
>
> *The two women, who had been roommates in college,* drifted apart *after they got married. Relationships take work and if both parties aren't tending to the relationship then you can find yourself* drifting apart. *Ok, let me think now...I am sure that it means no longer together or separated.*

The participant analyzed three different contexts with the same word and tried hard to recall the situation where he had seen the word. From this situation it is clear that the unknown words encountered many times in different contexts can be guessed more successfully. Sökmen (1997, p. 241) points out that "as the student meets the word through a variety of activities and in different contexts, a more accurate understanding of its meaning and use will develop". The difference between Excerpt 2 and 3 is that both participants used different contexts but participant 3 remembered having seen the word before and for this reason he arrived at an approximation without analyzing the sentences a great deal. He understood the sentence but could not really assign the correct meaning.

3.2. Word Features

Analyzing word features was a strategy used very often by the participants to discover the meaning of new words.

Excerpt 4

> *R: How will you go about "floating"?*
> *P3: I will try to guess the meaning because when I read the whole sentence nearly half of Antarctica's coastline is hidden by thick* floating. *I know all*

the other words ....thick is an adjective...but floating ... float is a word stem and ing is an ending. This must be something in progress or...

R: What does floating mean?

P3: I will use other context sentences. The world's first floating *city is absolutely gigantic and could set sail in about three years.*

The company Ooms Bouwmaatschappij has built the first eight of the planned 500 floating *houses on the outskirts of Amsterdam. Yes, I think it is" lundrues" (L1 equivalent).*

That participant obviously tried to guess the meaning of the word "floating" by analyzing the other word features in context. He figured out that "thick" is an adjective and divided floating into the word steam and ending. However, he could not guess the meaning without using other context sentences. The student seems to think that "floating" is a noun and he did not consider the whole sentence. Participant 5 used the same strategy to discover the meaning of the word "deteriorate" and guessed it successfully.

Excerpt 5

R: How will you go about the word "deteriorate"?

P5: I remember I have seen this word before but what is it? Let me read the sentence, but the climate deteriorated *over the last 30 million years. It is a verb because it ends in "ed" in the end...let me think now... I know what rate is...de is this a prefix? This definitely has a negative meaning ...the climate deteriorated, this must be something like changed or got worse. Yes, it must be it.*

Participant 6 obviously analyzed the word deteriorate in terms of part of speech first and then he turned to word stem and a prefix. Even though he was not sure if *de-* is a prefix or not, he assumed that it has a negative meaning. However, *teriorate* is not a stem and definitely his conclusion was based on the context, the climate deteriorated. This shows that the participant tried to take into consideration word features but in fact he guessed the meaning based on a sentence.

3.3. General world knowledge

Nation (2001, p. 245) emphasizes the importance of prior knowledge of the topic and that real world knowledge can play a vital part in guessing, especially when it provides the schema or the background knowledge for readers. There were few facts from the think-aloud protocol that the study participants guessed the meaning of unknown words using general world knowledge. Participant 1 used this strategy and guessed correctly the meaning of the term "most remote" based on real world knowledge.

Excerpt 6

> *P1: Now, when I read the great continent Gondwana had drifted apart. No idea. I will read the context sentence now. The two women, who had been roommates in college, drifted apart after they got married. Oh yes, drifted apart means jane ndarë (Albanian translation).*
>
> *R: How did you guess the meaning?*
>
> *P1: The two women probably drifted apart after they got married. This is normal. Is it correct?*

It is clear to the participant that, after getting married, women drift apart however she was able to provide the Albanian translation for the word. On the other hand, Participant 2 tried to use general world knowledge to discover the meaning of the word "remote" but she failed and turned to the bilingual dictionary.

Excerpt 7

> *R: What do you do to discover the meaning of the word "remote"?*
>
> *P2: The Antarctic I know where it is... is the most* remote *continent. (Antarktiku është kontinenti më i ....) REMOTE, this is something related to the Antarctic and it is a geographic description...*

I will read the context sentence

a. *Space isn't remote at all. It's only an hour's drive away if your car could go straight upwards.*

b. *Brazil has many remote jungles.*

No idea, I will look up the word in the bilingual dictionary.

It can be seen from the excerpt, in Part 1, that participant 1 used knowledge of the world "I know where it is" but failed to guess the meaning of the word "*remote*" even though she knew that the Antarctic is a geographic description and also read two other context sentences. It seems that the sentence provided enough clues and gave the participant a chance to make the correct guess.

Excerpt 8

R: *How are you going to discover the meaning of "retains"?*

P4: *I will translate one part of the sentence. A life retains ...Jeta (L1 equivalent) ...what? I will refer to the other context sentences. Mr Parker looks set to retain his role as council leader. It didn't take long for the idea of forcing Internet providers to retain records of their users' activities. To retain his role? Isn't this hold or something like that?*

R: *Yes, it is. How did you guess it?*

P: *Well it is normal for someone who is a council leader to hold on to his role isn't it?*

Clearly, the participant made the correct guess based on the general world knowledge about the council leader. He admitted in the end that council leaders hold on. I would add that the sentence provided clues for the participant to make an approximate guess.

3.4. Intrinsic cues

The first participant who studies French used French words that resemble English words.

Excerpt 9

R*: How will you discover the meaning of the word "retains"?*

P1*: First of all it is a verb because it has s in the end. Life retains and...yes, this must be*

mban (Albanian translation).

R*: How did you come to this conclusion?*

P1*: Because retenir in French means mban (Albanian translation). Is this the same word?*

R*: Yes, it is.*

Obviously, the participant guessed the meaning of the word "retains" by comparing it with the French word *retenir*. This participant attempted to use this strategy for other words as well. She used it to discover the meaning of the word "shelves" as well but she came to an approximation.

Excerpt 10

R*: What will you do now with the word" shelves"?*

P1*: Ice* shelves *or glaciers. Shelves ....maybe this is something to sell (wrong guess). Or, no or glaciers. Ok I think I got it now. Glace means in French a huge mass of ice and this must be it.*

R*: So, what does shelves mean?*

P1*: I think these are separate pieces of ice.*

R: How did you come to the conclusion ?

P1: I just remembered the bookshelves that I have at home.

On the other hand, participant 3 used the strategy to discover the meaning of the word "shelves" as follows:

Excerpt 11

R: How will you discover the meaning of the word "shelves"?

P3: Hmm..I will read the sentence and try to guess it. Nearly half of Antarctica's coastline is hidden by thick floating ice shelves *or glaciers. ..ice shelves or glaciers. Isn't **glicer** used in Albanian as well?*

R: What does it mean?

P3: It means ice ....probably ice shelves. (L1 equivalent-akullnaje)

R: How did you guess it?

P3: From L1 word.

Obviously the participant successfully guessed the correct meaning of the word "*glacier*" from the Albanian *glacier* which is used often, especially in the language of the newspaper.

3.5. Asking the teacher

Asking the teacher is used at the initial stage of discovering the meaning of unknown words, however it was used a lot to check and confirm the meaning of the unknown words by the participants. It can be seen from the protocol data that the students rely on asking the teacher to either check or confirm the meaning of the unknown words. Often, a student asked a teacher for a synonym or for an L1 translation. The use of this strategy is probably due to the fact that the learners had been educated in the teacher-centered classroom and the teacher had been the primary source of information. Therefore, this student

population still relies on the teacher a lot.

Excerpt 12

> *R: What will you do to discover the meaning of "luxuriant"?*
>
> *P1: I will analyze the sentence. Ok...this is an adjective because it describes the vegetation.*
>
> *R: What are you thinking now?*
>
> *P1: I am trying to find a word to help me...then I will turn to the context sentences. Captain Cook named the place Botany Bay because of the luxuriant jungle vegetation surrounding it.*
>
> *R: Any sentence cue here?*
>
> *P1: No, I cannot guess it but I will ask you...what does it mean?*
>
> *R: It means plentiful.*

It seems that the participant tried to guess the meaning from the context and tried to analyze the word "luxuriant" by referring to other context sentences but there were not enough clues. It seems that the participant gave up very quickly and asked the teacher. The teacher was mainly asked for L1 translations or English synonyms. L1 translations are fast, easily understood by the students, and make possible the transfer of all knowledge a student has of the L1 word (collocations, associations, etc) onto the L2 equivalent. (Schmitt, 1997). That is exactly the reason why L1 equivalents are dangerous; characteristics of the L1 word are transferred where it is not appropriate. Similarly, Participant 1 tried to guess the meaning of "*floating*" from the context but it seems that there were unusable contextual clues since many words appeared unknown to her.

Excerpt 13

> *R: How about the word you have underlined "floating"?*
>
> *P1: Well.. it is something like fly. Oh, no the* floating *ice, the ice ca not fly.*

(Wrong guess). I will read the context sentences now. The world's first floating city is absolutely gigantic, fully loaded with amenities and necessities and could set sail in about three years.

R: I see you are shaking your head. Why?

P1: The sentence is too difficult.

R: What will you do next?

P1: I will ask you. What does it mean?

R: I will explain it to you. It means being buoyed up on water or other liquid.

The participant decided to ask the teacher for the meaning because she first identified "floating" as fly but then realized that "ice" cannot fly and this led to the wrong guess. In the end, she admitted that the teacher is the best resource to explain the word in English. Then she turned to the bilingual dictionary for an Albanian translation. On the other hand, participant 6 used this strategy to find the meaning of the word "indigenous" for both the English and Albanian equivalents.

Excerpt 14

R: How will you go about the word "indigenous"?

P6: I will try to guess it from the context. It is the only continent without an <u>indigenous</u> human population. Only continent with...this is a kind of human population...no, no

I know that this is an adjective but the meaning...

R: What steps will you take next?

P6: I will ask you for both the English and Albanian equivalents.

R: Ok, it means native and the L1 equivalent is vendas.

Clearly, this participant used the strategy for equivalents, the English and Albanian ones and refused to use any other resource.

3.6. Monolingual dictionary

Another strategy used by the learners to find out the meaning of the unknown words is the monolingual dictionary. In general monolingual dictionaries contain much more information about each word than bilingual dictionaries (Nation, 2001).

It seems that the participants used the monolingual dictionary mainly when they failed to guess the meaning of the unknown words from the context. It was also noticeable that they carefully chose the right definition for the unknown words.

Excerpt 15

> *R: How are you going to discover the meaning of "indigenous"?*
> *P1: I am thinking that this means something like...distinctive maybe or...I am not sure.*
> *R: What will you do now?*
> *P1: I will read it again...Indigenous human population. I am not sure. I will try to look up the meaning in the dictionary.*
> *R: Which dictionary?*
> *P1: Monolingual dictionary. Indigenous means: belonging to a particular place or NATIVE.*

It seems that this participant failed to guess the correct meaning of the word *indigenous* and first she though that it means distinctive. However, she decided to use the dictionary and find the correct meaning.

Excerpt 16

> *R: How are you going to discover the meaning of "drifted apart"?*
> *P3: I will try to translate the sentence, but the climate deteriorated over the last*

30 million years, once the great continent Gondwana had drifted apart. *(he is trying to understand the rest of the sentence so that he can add the missing bit by using co-text) por klima u ndryshua ne 30 milione vitet e fundit, kur kontinenti I madh Gondwana u....what does this mean? (laughs).*

R: Why are you laughing?

P3: Because I am confused now. I can't think of any solution...

R: What will you do next?

P4: I will simply check the monolingual dictionary.

Similarly, like the first participant, the third participant tried to guess the meaning of the term "drifted apart" by translating it word-by-word. However, she did not put much effort in understanding it from the context but used the monolingual dictionary. This was also evident when the learner used both monolingual and bilingual dictionaries. This is especially true for low proficiency learners who attempt to learn both the English and Albanian equivalents. The data show that this will lead to better word retention.

Excerpt 17

R: How will you discover the meaning of the word "thick"?

P4: Let me see... Nearly half of Antarctica's coastline is hidden by thick floating ice...

Ok now I will translate it .... I know what hidden is...but thick ...what can ice be?

R: Any idea coming into your mind?

P4: No, not really. I will check the dictionaries for both English and Albanian equivalents.

R: Why would you need both of them?

P4: I learn both that way. Ok, it is dense and L1 equivalent is i dendur. So, it is an adjective.

It is obvious that that the learner sought more accurate information, both the English and Albanian equivalents. He first approached the monolingual dictionary and read all definitions until he decided that "thick" means "dense". He came to an approximate meaning but not to the correct one. It can be seen that the dictionaries do not always lead to a correct solution. He was interested in Albanian equivalent and used the bilingual dictionary.

3.7. Analyzing part of speech

The participants used this strategy to discover the meaning of unknown words. Most of the participants used the strategy in combination with other strategies; checking dictionaries or asking the teacher in order to find the meaning.

Excerpt 18

> *R: How are you going to discover the meaning of the word "sink"?*
>
> *P3: I will read the sentence first and analyze it. This region is the earth's major heat* sink *and contains ninety per cent of the world's ice and nearly three-quarters of its fresh water. ...contains. What can contain something? This must be a noun first of all.*
>
> *P3: I am not sure. Maybe you can tell me what it means?*
>
> *R: Yes, it means basin.*

It can be seen that this participant tried to make use of parts of speech by referring to the noun sink first and analyzing the whole sentence, however he failed to guess the meaning of the word and asked the teachers for the meaning. The other example shows that the learner was attempting to analyze most parts of speech in a sentence in order to come to the correct meaning.

Excerpt 19

> R: *How will you go about "floating"?*
>
> P3: *I will definitely try to guess it.*
>
> R: *Why definitely?*
>
> P3: *Because when I read the whole sentence Nearly half of Antarctica's coastline is hidden by thick* floating. *I know all the other words ....thick is an adjective...but floating hmm float is a word steam and ing is an ending. This must be something in progress or...*
>
> P3: *I will use other context sentences. The world's first floating city is absolutely gigantic, and could set sail in about three years.*
>
> *The company Ooms Bouwmaatschappij has built the first eight of the planned 500 floating houses on the outskirts of Amsterdam. Yes, I think it is lundrues (L1 equivalent)*
>
> R: *How did you come to the conclusion that floating means lundrues?*
>
> P3: *Floating city set sail was the clue.*

It is noticeable that the participant refers to part of speech for the word *thick* but not for *floating*. She did not apply the strategy for the word that was meant to be inferred, but used the L1 equivalent *lundrues* which means *floating*. In this case there is a combination of strategies, part of speech and the L1 equivalent. In contrast, Participant 5 successfully discovered the correct meaning of the word "deteriorate" by only analyzing parts of speech in the sentence.

Excerpt 20

> R: *How will you go about the word "deteriorate"?*
>
> P5: *...let me think now... I know what rate is...de is this a prefix?(He is doing a morphological analysis). This definitely has a negative meaning ...*
>
> R: *What will you do next?*
>
> P5: *The climate deteriorated, this must be something like changed or got worse.*

Yes, it must be it.

R: Tell, me how did you come to the conclusion that deteriorate means get worse?

P5: I think it was easy. I guessed it from the context.

This participant refers to the part of speech but as he says – what was helpful were the words in the context. Most learners are aware of the part of speech of the item to be guessed- -but as a strategy it is rarely enough. The excerpt shows that neither part of speech nor morphology led to successful guessing.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, lexis is a very important part of a language. The teachers' responsibility is to follow different procedures suggested by researchers in this field and try to make the learning of words as easy as possible for the students. I definitely believe that words should not be taught as isolated items but in context for later use in conversation. It has been suggested that the lexical approach is very suitable in teaching ESP vocabulary which is more complex and requires more attention and time to study it because it involves low-frequency words. All in all, teachers should strive to help learners become independent learners and show them there are many vocabulary learning strategies that can be used to learn ESP words.

Based on the verbalization, the think-aloud protocol, the participants used different strategies to discover the meaning of unknown words. It was shown that the most frequently used discovery strategies were guessing from the context (syntactic and semantic), asking a teacher, a monolingual dictionary and analyzing the part of speech. The most frequently used strategy, was guessing from the context, shows that the participants in this study were good guessers.

It seems that the learners use the strategies in a combined way, which is positive for further learning. Nevertheless, there were learners who immediately turned to the dictionary without trying to guess the meaning from the context. These learners should be helped and trained in using guessing from context because it enhances their independence.

The study suggests that the students should be exposed to a variety of strategies that are suitable for learning the unknown words they encounter in reading different academic texts. The most important step in helping students to use different strategies which would lead to success is organizing strategy training sessions with students in every class so that our students can learn words more effectively.

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