

Transformation of Words into Vocabulary

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Abstract

This article explores the significance of a word and the changes it undergoes in its form when it is placed in the hierarchy of grammatical constituents thereby forming a new word termed as vocabulary. This change or transformation is the result of affixations. Transformation becomes essential as the words learnt cannot be used as such in a context. One should have a clear understanding and the knowledge of the words before using them in a context; otherwise it would lead to a syntactic error. This article also includes a few tasks that would enable the students to actively participate in developing their vocabulary that would automatically boost up their confidence level and enhance their communicative competence.

Keywords: Affixation, Transformation, Grammatical constituents, Vocabulary, Word Knowledge, Communicative Competence

1. Introduction

This paper focuses on how words play a vital role in learning a language and enhances the word power, which is very essential in this fast growing, competitive and commercial world. Most of the students pay less attention to English language as they are taught in such a setup that focuses more on technical subjects that would fetch them a good job and a bright future. The importance of the second language is not clearly stated at the lower level and that results in the poor acquisition of communication skills. Job hunters demand good communicators, who can promote their business by articulating their projects in an appropriate and effective way. Although the students possess a good technical knowledge but they don't have words to express and put across their ideas in a clear and candid manner. Hence, this article would help the learners of English language to understand and develop word knowledge or vocabulary thereby improving their confidence level.

2. Literature Review

Words, words, words in songs and stories.....,

If only I understood them.....,

Would not this world be changed

Pete Seger (Words, Words, Words.....)

Word is defined as a unit of a language consisting of one or more spoken sounds that function as principal carrier of meaning. '*Words are a group of sounds, that can be written as a group of letters of the alphabet and which carries a certain meaning*' – Orient Longman's Learner's Dictionary of Modern English. According to Freud, '*Words are a plastic material with which one can do all sorts of things*'. A word is defined as a unit of a language to which we assign some meaning. It serves both for communication and thinking.

Word learning is a fundamental building block in the acquisition of language, and has often been identified as one of the 'special' components of language (Hauser et al. 2002; Pinker & Jackendoff 2005). It is sometimes identifiable according to such criteria as being the minimal possible unit with a regular stress pattern, and phonological changes.

Lyons (1968) and Palmer (1971) discussed the phonological and syntactical criteria of the word. They stated that word is

characterized as the principal unit of lexicography. It is the basis of the morphology and syntax. Morphology is the study of internal structure of a word where as syntax is the rules of combining words into structure.

A word has a particular meaning; it has a particular group of sounds, and a particular grammatical function. As such it is a semantic, phonological and grammatical unit. The degrees of knowing a word are reflected in the precision with which we use a word, how quickly we understand a word, and how well we understand and use words in different modes (e.g., receptive, productive) and for different purposes (e.g., formal vs. informal occasions). Knowing a word also implies knowing how that word relates to other fields semantically (sometimes called *word schema*). Word knowledge also comes in two forms, receptive and productive. Receptive vocabulary includes words that we recognize when we hear or see them. Productive vocabulary includes words that we use when we speak or write. Receptive vocabulary is typically larger than productive vocabulary, and may include many words to which we assign some meaning, even if we don't know their full definitions and connotations – (Kamil & Hiebert, in press).

Generally, the more we know about a specific concept, the more words we bring to our understanding of that concept. This is because, we have individual interests and backgrounds, and each of us brings different words from experience or knowledge to shape the understanding of the concept. Word knowledge involves an understanding of the word's definition as well as the word's approximate contextual usage (Stahl & Fairbanks, 1986). Researchers agree that knowing a word is an incremental process which consumes time and requires repeated exposure, (Graves & Prens, 1986; Stahl, 1986; Stahl & Nagy, 2006). Zimmerman (1997) was even more specific when she indicated that the process includes three primary aspects of understanding namely: (a) the subtleties of a word's various meanings, (b) the ranges of those meanings, and (c) the suitability of the word in context.

Words no longer remain words when used in a sentence or context. Words undergo change in their forms and meanings based on the contexts that are termed as vocabulary. Vocabulary can be broadly defined as knowledge of words and word meanings. It is the study of meaning of words, usage, root words, prefix and suffix and analogies. When a person knows the different meanings of a word with inflections, their resultant meanings and usage, then he is said to have knowledge of words or a good repertoire of vocabulary. It means that a person is aware or has come across its different forms while reading or listening and knows to apply while speaking or writing without changing the basic meaning. The words of a language or a list or collection of the words or phrases of a language, is also called vocabulary.

They only give referential meaning and do not carry much significance, whereas words when used in a context appropriately carry more sense rather than giving just the meaning.

3. Words in Isolation & Words in Context

Words in isolation are like scattered beads. They don't carry much significance unless they are sewn together with the help of a thread called grammar. A word in isolation or citation form has only what Widdowson (1978) calls a conceptual meaning or signification but it does not have functional value. Isolated words convey only denotative meaning. If a word has reference to object, action or event in the physical world it is described as its referential or denotative meaning.

Eg: *Mean* - /mi:n/ (verb)

Mean - Referential / Denotative meaning – to have something as a meaning; to signify something

A word in a context gives connotative meaning i.e. sensing the word relationship and thereby giving a supplementary meaning of that particular word besides relating it to the attitudes and emotions of a language user in choosing a word. Mention must be made of Wittgenstein's slogan "Don't look for meaning of a word, look for its use (Lyons: 1968:410).

The example mentioned below explains the connotative meaning of a word '**mean**' in different context.

e. g. 1. He doesn't like spending money. He is very *mean*. (*adjective*).

2. What does this word *mean* (*verb*) in English?

3. Find the *mean* (*noun*) for these values.

- The first sentence describes the quality of the person. Here the word "mean" indicates that the person is not willing to share or give money; not generous.
- In the next example the word "mean" acts as a verb and it means "to signify".

- The word “mean” in the last statement signifies “average”.

Connotative meaning derives from a mix of cultural, political, social and historical sources and learners will be aware of this phenomenon in their own language. The teacher can help the students to develop appropriate awareness of connotative meaning in the target language while dealing with texts. Students can be given extensive exposure to authentic reading and listening material that would help them to encounter and learn from a wide range of texts containing connotative meaning.

4. Transformation of Words into Vocabulary

A word undergoes a change in its form by means of inflections to give an appropriate and accurate meaning to the sentence. The change that it undergoes is called transformation. Transformation creates or gives rise to new words. These new words when used in different contexts give different meanings. This is called vocabulary.

The table no.1 given below explains how inflections are formed from a single root word using appropriate affixes followed by few examples of their usage.

4.1 Usage

- The drugs prescribed by the doctor should be given at *regular* intervals (period of time). Students should come *regularly* (frequently / daily) to classes.
- The new scheme would be *regularized* (implement lawfully) very soon.

This type of transition from one form of a word to another is called transformation. Transformation brings a qualitative change in the sentence structure thereby describing the conversion of one syntactic structure into another related syntactic structure.

4.2 Need for Transformation and its Implications in Learning a Language

Everything in this world is subjected to change, which establishes a bond or a relation with another to fulfill its purpose of existence. Similarly, when a word gets transformed, it not only satisfies the need of its existence but also gets enriched in its form and meaning.

List of words learnt would remain as words, if they are used in the way they are learnt. Once a word is transformed using affixations in different contexts, the status of those words would rise to the stage of vocabulary. If a student doesn't know to change the form of one word to another word using affixations then it may lead to syntactic error.

For e. g: *Words learnt*: transform, apply, subsequent, communicate, misinterpret.

Incorrect version: A change from one form of a thing to another is called *transform*. Its *apply* would not leave a good impact on the listener, if it is used as such. *Subsequent*, *communicate* would sound awkward. Therefore they should be properly used to avoid *misinterpret*.

Correct version: A change from one form of a thing to another is called *transformation*. Its *application* would not leave a good impact on the listener, if it is used as such. *Subsequently*, *communication* would sound awkward. Therefore they should be properly used to avoid *misinterpretation*.

If the learnt words are used as such they would not give the exact meaning and the intention of the speaker or the writer would not be expressed properly. Hence, the need for transformation becomes essential for a good and effective communication.

4.2.1 Its Implication in Learning a Language

When a word gets transformed into vocabulary by way of affixation and used in an appropriate place and situation it leaves a very good impact on the reader's or listener's mind. This cognitive process of transformation and application of words in sentences would build confidence level and fluency in the speaker. Though students put a lot of effort to master the English language they are unable to achieve command over it, due to which they get frustrated and at times depressed. In such a situation, a teacher can provide them a stress-free and relaxing environment by making their learning easy and effective. One such approach is task-based approach, which was popularized by N. Prabhu while working in Bangalore, India, on his Communicational Teaching Project began in 1979. Second language acquisition researchers describe task in terms of their usefulness for collecting data and eliciting samples of learners' language for research purposes.

Bialystok (1983:103) suggests that a communication task must have the following:

- a) Stimulating real communicative exchange
- b) Providing incentive for the L2 speaker/learner to convey information.

- c) Providing control for the information items required for the investigation and
- d) Fulfilling the needs to be used for the goals of the experiment.

Nunan proposed that a communication task

‘..... is a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form’. (Nunan, 1989a:10)

Task-based learning is designed to benefit the students for the following reasons:

- Student-centered approach ensures meaningful communication.
- Provides practical extra-linguistic skill development.
- Helps the students express their views without any hesitation and inhibitions and in learning a language naturally.
- Gives exposure to various ranges of lexical phrases, collocations and patterns as well as language forms.
- Keeps the students engaged where students spend a lot of time communicating with each other.
- Above all, it is enjoyable and motivating.

Therefore, the teacher before giving them a task can motivate the students by enunciating the importance of English language learning and its usage in this commercial and competitive world. The teacher can give them small projects like conducting interviews in the college campus, reporting on any important issue, anchoring programmes etc. The same may be recorded and presented in the classroom based on which the teacher can grade the students. These activities would provide an opportunity for the students to gauge their own performances and the difficulty faced during these projects. This type of practical exposure would compel them to learn English language and to gain mastery over it. Though it is a bit challenging task to the students, it may be of much use to the students in building their confidence, vocabulary and communication skills.

5. Techniques to Learn Vocabulary

Vocabulary can be learnt incidentally or directly i.e. through exposure and interaction with increasingly complex and rich oral language and by encountering lots of new words in text, either through their own reading or by being read (National Reading Panel, 2000). In order to make the students learn vocabulary incidentally, teacher can provide or create a situation by means of which learning becomes easier and enjoyable. For instance, showing video clips for 10 minutes on any animated movie, clipping from Animal Planet or Discovery Channel, NEWS Channel etc. Later, the teacher can divide the students in groups and can ask them to interpret what they have seen in their own style in varied presentations. The group which presents in a different way using as many words they have heard in the video clippings can be awarded points or marks.

For teaching direct vocabulary, English teachers can instruct the students to bring or carry a dictionary in every English class regularly. Before teaching them to learn or memorize the words directly (giving a list of words with meanings) the teacher can teach them the usage of dictionary - For eg: root word, inflections, stress, pronunciation, parts of speech, synonyms, antonyms, collocations and application of a word in different contexts.

In the table no. 2 given below explains how a word is transformed into vocabulary. In this table a word (response) changes its form through affixations like – able; - ible ; - ity; - ly; - ive; - ness thus giving rise to new words. Subsequently, their parts of speech and meanings get changed.

With the help of the above table students can be asked to frame sentences using the word “response” in different contexts by changing its form using inflections or suffixes. This activity not only enriches their vocabulary but also it would motivate and boost their confidence level.

5.1 Tasks to Enrich Students’ Vocabulary

TASK 1

Objective:

1. To make the students comprehend the text, decipher the meaning of the difficult words; learn the meanings and its usage.
2. To make the students learn a word thoroughly using a dictionary.

Tools:

Flash cards and Dictionary

Sample:

I year Engineering Students = 30

Intermediate Level

Rubrics:

1. The teacher can divide the class into groups of equal size.
2. Different reading material with flash cards can be distributed to the groups and they can be asked to read the material in groups and discuss the same to understand the text.
3. In the first round any one student from each group can be asked to present the text in his/her own words for 1 or 2 minutes and marks can be awarded for their presentations.
4. Then the teacher can instruct the groups to pick out the difficult words and note them down in the flash cards provided to them.
5. In the next round one student from each group can be called and asked to weave a message or story or any information using the selected words for 2 minutes without worrying about their accurate meanings. The group which uses the selected words in the context of their own without any hesitation can be awarded marks and the group which uses the selected words appropriately or very close to the context can be appreciated and awarded high marks when compared to other groups. (This type of practice is given to give repeated exposure to the words they have come across in the text.)
6. In the third round, the teacher can ask the students to construe what they have listened and understood from other group members' presentations for which a short discussion can be arranged to evaluate the performance.
7. In the fourth round, the words written on the flash card can be collected and exchanged with other groups and the groups can be asked to find out the meanings of those words from the dictionary and write down the meanings at the back of the cards.
8. In the final round, the cards may be collected immediately without any delay and then quiz (rapid fire) round can be conducted based on the words and meanings gathered on the flash cards. For e.g.
 - ✓ What is the synonym of ----?
 - ✓ Three options can be given and asked them to select the right option
 - ✓ What is the part of speech for the word ----?
 - ✓ Make as many words from the given word using prefixes and suffixes?
 - ✓ Use the word ---- in different context?

If this activity consumes time, it can be continued in the next class. This type of activity will enhance concrete learning for effective communication thus promoting the process of systematic way of vocabulary learning.

TASK 2

This is a challenging activity, where students learn to identify the forms of a word and its application in a sentence. Unless they know the proper usage of the learnt words they will not speak confidently and fluently.

Objective:

- To make the students learn and identify the parts of speech and its functions/applications.
- To help them learn the structure of the sentence and

Tools:

Colour pens, text passages and a sheet with a tabular column

Sample:

I year Engineering Students = 30

Intermediate Level

Procedure:

The teacher divides the class in equal size and provides each group with a different text passage and asks them to underline the parts of speech and the phrases with different colour sketch pens, each colour indicating different parts of speech. Then, she distributes a printed sheet of paper containing a tabular column (Table 3). She instructs the

students to pick out the parts of speech and phrases from the text passage and to write it under the relevant heading in the provided sheet of paper.

The teacher after providing the above tabular column gives eight digit numbers randomly from 1 to 8 to each group for e.g. 75148263 and asks them to pick the words as per number given from the first row. Care must be taken that the students do not take the words from second or third row. Then they can be asked to make as many sentences as possible based on the sentence pattern, if necessary they can change the tense form. They are at liberty to use articles and other grammatical components to make the sentence sensible. The teacher can make sure that the students are sticking to the numbers given to them. The group which makes few sensible sentences based on the number given to them is the winner. If the students want to rewrite the same sentence in their own words to make it simple and easy to understand they can be allowed to do so.

e.g. Because Exclusively Protection Accept Colour Of She [7 5 1 4 8 2 6 3- words taken from the first row]

She exclusively accepted the colour because of protection.

[Rearrange the words in a sensible sentence]

This activity not only helps the student to arrange the words and frame them in a regular pattern but also helps to understand the applications of the parts of speech and sentence pattern. As memorizing the words and their meaning alone is not enough, usage is also very important for an effective communication.

6. Conclusion

A word has to undergo transformation when it is used in different contexts. This change is essential to coin new words and their meanings. Otherwise, the word becomes static in nature and would have a limited meaning. This transformation enables a writer or the speaker to develop new words and their range of meanings to express their thoughts and ideas explicitly. This transformation process not only enriches the vocabulary but also helps to form a grammatically correct sentence structure. Thus, learning transformation of words using affixation and experiencing them by using in different contexts enriches and enhances a person’s vocabulary thereby boosting the confidence level promoting effective communication among the students.

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Table 1. Formation of Inflections

ROOT WORD	PREFIX	SUFFIX
Regular	Irregular	Regularly
		Regularity
		Regularize
		Regularization

Table 2. Formation and Application of Words in Different Contexts

Root word	Inflections (prefixes & suffixes)	Parts of speech	Synonym	Antonym	Application of a word in different context
Response	-	Noun	Answer	-	In response to your enquiry-----?
Responsible	-ible	Adjective	Legally or morally obliged for doing something	irresponsible	She is responsible for every act of her's. Who is responsible for this mess? Smoking is responsible for many cases of lung cancer.
Irresponsible	Ir /-ble	Adjective	Not showing proper sense of responsibility	responsible	He is an irresponsible child.
Responsibility	-ity	Noun	Being accountable or responsible	-	It's my responsibility to lock the doors.
Responsibly	-ily	Adverb	In a rational or trust worthy way	irresponsibly	Behave responsibly.
Responsive	-ive	Adjective	Responding warmly or favourably.	irresponsive	Be responsive to suggestions, ideas, criticism etc.
Responsiveness	-ness	Noun	The act of responding warmly or favourably.	irresponsible	I always appreciate responsiveness.

Table 3. Activity

S. No	Noun (1)	Adjective/ Adjectival Phrase (2)	Pronoun / Relative Pronoun (3)	Verb (4)	Adverb / Adverbial Phrase (5)	Preposition/ Prepositional Phrase (6)	Conjunction/ Relative Clause (7)	Interjection (8)
1.	protection	colour	she	accept	exclusively	of	because	-
2.	duration	dry	it	supplied	well	from	and	-