Mnemonics- An Effective Tool for Vocabulary Building

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ABSTRACT--Enhanced vocabulary is an indispensable part of effective communication. However, very few people possess strong word power. Good vocabulary is not an innate property of an individual. Deliberate efforts to improve wordpower can result into improved expression of ideas through rich and wise usage of words. The steriotypical method of learning and retaining new words (rote learning) has not given desired output. In the present study, the researchers have contemplated the issue and used mnemonics as an effective vocabulary building tool. The results of the study reflect the effectiveness of mnemonics as a vocabulary booster.

Keywords--Vocabulary, mnemonics, word power, cloze test, visual stimuli, JAM.

I.   INTRODUCTION

Effective communication plays an important role in professional as well as personal life. To convey our ideas effectively in both oral and written forms, a rich vocabulary is necessary. When it comes to expressing our ideas in oral form, we must have a 'YOU' attitude i.e. the selection of words for the message should be in accordance with the audience we are addressing. We need to select appropriate words to convey our ideas in variance when it comes to children, challenged, youth, adults or intellectuals. In written communication also primarily in general writing enriched vocabulary is of paramount importance. Further, vocabulary forms the most important section of various competitive exams.

II.   PROBLEMS

i.   It is found that the traditional vocabulary boaster methods are not much effective in retaining the words and their meanings.

ii.   The old stereotypical pattern of giving handouts to the learners with words along with their meanings seem obsolete.

iii.   No pragmatic way of teaching vocabulary is used.

On analyzing the aforesaid problems it was found that there was a need to overhaul the existing stereotypical vocabulary teaching/learning methods . To viaduct this gap participatory tutorials were incorporated in the syllabi.

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III.   RESEARCH PATTERN

An emperical study with sample size of 30 undergraduate students of B.Sc(Agriculture), first semester.

The study aims at enhancing the vocabulary of 30 learners (our sample for the present study.)

The sample of thirty was further divided into two groups Group.A and Group.B.

IV.   PURPOSE

i.   Identification of difficulty in memorizing new words .

ii.   Identification of the reasons for poor retention of words and their meanings.

iii.   Alleviation of the detected problems by Contemporary Learning Tool-Mnemonics.

V.   RESEARCH DESIGN

This was an empirical study which included cumulative comprehensive evaluation of various classroom activities. The research design included:

i.   Diagnosis of the Problem

ii.   Implementation of Technique –Mnemonics as a vocabulary booster

iii.   Pre and Post Result Analysis

VI.   ACTION PLAN OF PRE IMPLEMENTATION STUDY

The first step of the research involves a pre diagnostic test which includes cloze test, visual stimuli, JAM, diaglouge delivery and paragraph writing. Word List I was provided to the learners to perform the aforesaid activities/tasks .

WORD LIST I:

1.   Zenith:.topmost.

2.   Verbose:talkative / using too many words.

3.   Robust:strong.

4.   Yammer: loud.

5.   Munch: chew.

6.   Coup: triumph.

7.   Abridge: shorten.

8.   Kinetic: in motion

9.   Aloof: . lonely

10.   Futile:useless.

11.   Superficial:shallow.

12.   Capacious: spacious/large in capacity.

13.   Anomaly: unusual/abnormal.

14.   Extol: praise.

15.   Deride:laughter/mock.

16.   Judicious: well judged.

17. Conformity:uniform.

18. Extravagance: overspending.

19. Vex: annoyed.

20. Curtail: shorten.

21. Concord: harmony.

22. Luminous: bright light

STAGE I: Five tests were given by the mentor to the learners in the following order:

Test 1 Cloze Test: Before conducting the cloze test, the learners were provided a handout of 22 words along with their meanings (Word List I). The performance was then evaluated and recorded.

Test 2 Visual Stimuli: Before conducting this activity, the learners were provided a handout of 22 words (Word List I) related to the image which was shown through a projector. The learners were give fifteen minutes to percieve the meaning and jot down their ideas using the given word list. They were asked to come one at a time to deliver their content. The performance was evaluated and recorded.

Test 3 JAM: In this activity, the learners were asked to speak on a given topic for a minute using Word List I. The performance was evaluated and recorded.

Test 4 Dialogue Delivery: This activity was carried out through small talk conversation, role plays etc. using Word List I. The performance was evaluated and recorded.

Test 5 Paragraph Writing: The learners were initially briefed on the different types and orders of paragraph writing. This was followed by a test in which they were provided with a list of words related to the given topic (Word List I). They were then asked to use those words in writing the content. The performance was evaluated and recorded.

The compilation and analyses of the result of the diagnostic test was done. It was found that the the learners could not perform well in the aforesaid tests and the common area where the learners lagged was poor retention of words and their meanings.

A corrective measure was planned to bridge this gap. The facilitators adopted mnemonics-'a system developed for assisting memorization' for vocabulary building.This is a technique for retaining the meaning of words in a plain manner.

The facilitator concocted a set of 22 words with mnemonics. The learners performed the above tests after using this technique for enhancing vocabulary. The following methodology was followed:

For example the hindi mnemonic "subh-jhukh- gaye- gate- par" for the english words Subjugate makes it easy for the native Indian learners. Similarly, the mnemonic "*dar*" (in Hindi) for the english word Duress again makes it easier for the native Indian learners and helps to retain its meaning i.e nightmare (which are scary/ threatening. Mundane with the mnemonic "*M for Monday; M for Mundane; Mondays are boring and so is Mundane*" helped the learners to retain its meaning boring. It was found that mnemonics acted as a catalyst in retention and usage of higher level vocabulary for native learners (Indian). Learners exhibited satisfactory learning behaviour resulting into successful learning outcomes.

WORD LIST II:

1. Zenith:

Resemblance: The topmost computer company Zenith

Mnemonic: "Although Z is the last letter in the alphabet series; it is the first letter of Zenith which means the topmost."

This will help the learner to retain the meaning of zenith i.e. *topmost*.

2. Verbose:

Resemblance: Ver + bose = Words + boss

Mnemonics: "My boss uses too many words, he is talkative…"

This will help the learner to retain the meaning of verbose i.e. *talkative / using too many words*.

3. Robust:

Resemblance: Robot

Mnemonic: "Strong is a robot and so is robust."

This will help the learner to retain the meaning of robust i.e. *strong*.

4. Yammer:

Resemblance: Yammer Yammer Hammer Hammer

Mnemonics: "Loud is Hammer…Loud is Yammer…"

This will help the learner to retain the meaning of yammer i.e. *loud*.

5. Munch:

Resemblance: Munch chocolate

Mnemonic: "Munch few munch after the brunch."

This will help the learner to retain the meaning of munch i.e. *chew*.

6. Coup:

Resemblance: Victory Cup

Mnemonic: "We hold the victory cup high to celebrate the coup."

This will help the learner to retain the meaning of coup i.e. *triumph*.

7. Abridge:

Resemblance: A Bridge

Mnemonic: "Build a…bridge to shorten the distance between friends."

This will help the learner to retain the meaning of abridge i.e. *shorten*.

8. Kinetic:

Resemblance: Kinetic scooter

Mnemonic: "A fast ride on kinetic scooter."

This will help the learner to retain the meaning of kinetics i.e. *in motion*.

9. Aloof:

Resemblance: Alone on a roof

Mnemonic: "Alone on the roof standing aloof…"

This will help the learner to retain the meaning of aloof i.e. *lonely*.

10. Futile:

Resemblance: Flute

Mnemonic: "Flute on tile cannot be used."

This will help the learner to retain the meaning of futile i.e. *useless*.

11. Superficial:

    Resemblance: Super fish

    Mnemonic: "Fish if swims in shallow water becomes super fish…"

    This will help the learner to retain the meaning of superficial i.e. *shallow*.

12. Capacious:

    Resemblance: Space

    Mnemonic: "S for Space, it is spacious and so is capacious."

    This will help the learner to retain the meaning of capacious i.e. *spacious/large in capacity*.

13. Anomaly:

    Resemblance: Abnormally

    Mnemonics: "Anomaly and abnormally rhyme and their meanings are of the same kind."

    This will help the learner to retain the meaning of anomaly i.e. *unusual/abnormal*.

14. Extol:

    Resemblance: At Toll

    Mnemonic: "Collect the toll, at the toll, count the collection and enjoy the extol."

    This will help the learner to retain the meaning of extol i.e. *praise*.

15. Deride:

    Resemblance: laughter/mock

    Mnemonic: "D… Ride on a donkey… and there is laughter around."

    This will help the learner to retain the meaning of deride i.e. *laughter/mock*.

16. Judicious:

    Resemblance: Judge

    Mnemonic: "Judicious Jude Judges the jobs judiciously."

    This will help the learner to retain the meaning of extol i.e. *well judged.*

17. Conformity:

    Resemblance: Uniformity

    Mnemonic: "Uniformity in attire brings conformity in soldiers."

    This will help the learner to retain the meaning of conformity i.e. *uniform*.

18. Extravagance:

    Resemblance: Extra Giving

    Mnemonic: "Extra giving on extra shopping makes you extravagant."

    This will help the learner to retain the meaning of extravagance i.e. *overspending*.

19. Vex:

    Resemblance: Wax and Vex

    Mnemonic: "Burned candle melts as wax, burned person melts all vexed."

    This will help the learner to retain the meaning of vex i.e. *annoyed*.

20. Curtail:

    Resemblance: Cut tail

    Mnemonic: "Cut from the top…cut from the tail; clip the size and make it short."

    This will help the learner to retain the meaning of curtail i.e. *shorten.*

21. Concord:

    Resemblance: Instrumental cord

    Mnemonic: "Strike the cord in concord."

    This will help the learner to retain the meaning of concord i.e. *harmony.*

22. Luminous:

    Resemblance: Luminous inverter

    Mnemonic: "Luminous inverter brightens a home."

    This will help the learner to retain the meaning of luminous i.e. *bright light.*

Action Plan for Post Implementation Study

   The second step of the research involves a post diagnostic test which includes cloze test, visual stimuli, JAM, diaglouge delivery and paragraph writing.

STAGEII: Five Retests were given by the mentor to the learners in the following order:

   Retest 1 Cloze Test II: Before conducting the cloze test II, the learners were again provided a handout of twenty two words along with their mnemonics (Word List II) to retain their meanings. The performance of the learners was then evaluated and recorded.

   Retest 2 Visual Stimuli II: Before conducting this activity, the learners were again provided a handout of 22 words (Word List II) related to the image(along with their mnemonics to assist retention of their meanings) which was shown through a projector. The learners were give fifteen minutes to percieve the meaning and jot down their ideas using the given word list. They were asked to come one at a time to deliver their content. The performance was evaluated and recorded.

   Retest 3 JAM: In this activity, the learners were again asked to speak on a given topic for a minute using Word List II. The performance was evaluated and recorded.

   Retest 4 Dialogue Delivery: The activity was again carried out through small talk conversation, role plays etc. where the learners were asked to use the words mentioned in Word List II provided to them which contained mnemonics also.The performance was evaluated and recorded.

Retest 5 Paragraph Writing: The learners were asked to write a paragraph on a given topic using Word List II. The performance was evaluated and recorded.

Evaluation Criteria (Vocabulary Based)Total marks 50
Written through Test /Retest 1 and Test/Retest 5 :

                         Cloze Test 10 marks

                         Paragraph Writing 10 marks.

Oral through Test/Retest 2,Test/Retest 3 and Test/Retest 4:

                         Visual Stimili 10 marks

                         JAM 10 marks

                         Dialogue Delivery 10 marks

VII.   DATA ANALYSES AND FINDINGS

The analyses of pre and post findings of the present study reveals the effectiveness of Mnemonics as a vocabulary building tool.

The performances of the learners of both the groups –Group A and Group B in the five Tests in stage I was recorded as below:
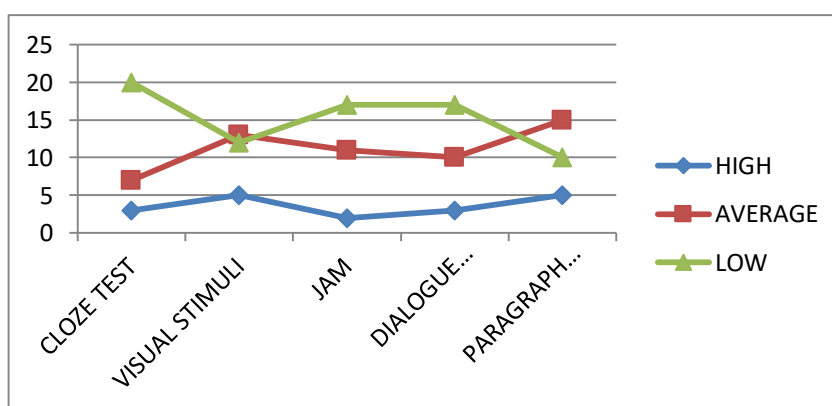
Table 1: Pre implementation scores of both the Groups(Group A(15) & Group B (15))

PARAMETERS	HIGH	AVERAGE	LOW
CLOZE TEST	3	7	20
VISUAL STIMULI	5	13	12
JAM	2	11	17
DIALOGUE DELIVERY	3	10	17
PARAGRAPH WRITING	5	15	10

It is well evident from the result analyses of the tests (TEST 1 ,2,3,4&5)conducted in Stage I that most of the learners could not perform well because of the limited word power.They were not able to express their thoughts due to paucity of vocabulary.

Thereby resulting into low score.However very few learners were able to demonstrate their potential by scoring high in the aforesaid tests. The high number of average scorers also indicate towards emerging need to enhance vocabulary.

Figure 1: Graphical Representation of Result Analysis of Tests Conducted in Stage I


The retests were conducted after using Mnemonics as a vocabulary building tool.The results of the retests were recorded as below:

Table 2: Post implementation scores of both the Groups(Group A(15) & Group B (15))

PARAMETERS	HIGH	AVERAGE	LOW
CLOZE TEST	8	17	5
VISUAL STIMULI	17	8	5
JAM	11	12	7
DIALOGUE DELIVERY	13	12	5
PARAGRAPH WRITING	8	14	8

Figure 2: Graphical Representation of Result Analyses of ReTests Conducted in Stage II
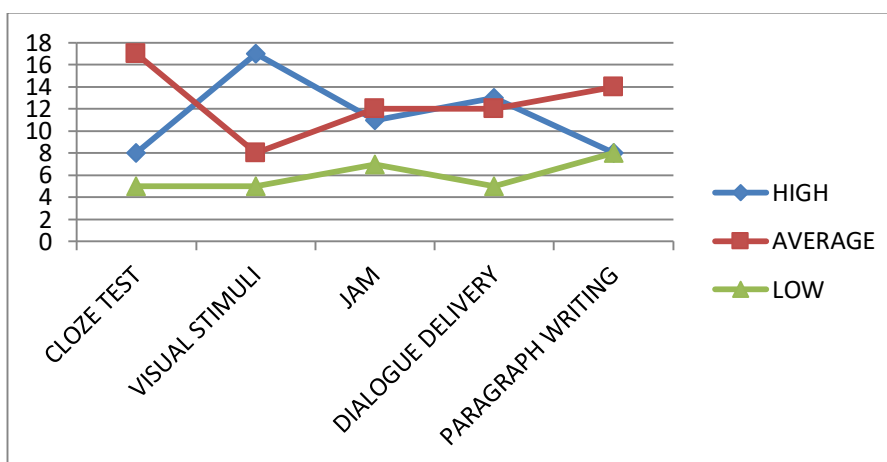
The result analyses of the retests (Retest 1 ,2,3,4 &5)conducted in StageII shows that the number of low scoring learners has remarkably decreased. This is directly proportional to the efficacy of Mnemonics as a vocabulary building tool because all the retests in Stage II were conducted after guiding learners to use Mnemonics(as a vocabulary booster). Further it is observed that there is an upward shift in the learners'scores in almost all the retests conducted in Stage II.The number of learners with high scores reflects the high competence of Mnemonics as a vocabulary building tool.

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