

A Research carried out On

Developing Vocabulary learning among Diploma Holders of English -A study based on three Advanced Technological Institutes/SLIATE- Dehiwala, Jaffna & Trincomalee

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1. Covering Letter: It is attached. `

2. Title of the Research:

Developing Vocabulary learning among Diploma Holders of English-A study based on three Advanced Technological Institutes/SLIATE- Dehiwala, Jaffna & Trincomalee

3. Abstract

The study on developing vocabulary learning among the adult learners in a second language has been undertaken in view of recognizing the real difficulties encountered by the Sri Lankan learners in learning English as a Second Language. This is a problematic and challenging area for the target group whose first language is either Tamil or Sinhala. Here the researcher has identified the problem in the following manner:

- Are there any difficulties encountered by Diploma holders while learning vocabulary in a second language?
- When these students learn the subject of vocabulary in four semesters of the diploma program, how is their performance measured/evaluated?
- Are these students really self-motivated to learn the vocabulary?

As a lecturer of English and a researcher, I felt it interesting to explore on this study to identify the difficulties in learning vocabulary. The target group is of above 20 years belonging to the upper intermediate level in English. This research is going to find out issues on learning vocabulary and through findings the most effective teaching techniques will be introduced in the class rooms in order to motivate the learners to learn vocabulary without hesitation.

The introductory chapter generally discusses about learning and teaching of vocabulary, research problem and research objectives. The following chapter is Literature view in which the researcher has pointed out importance of second language acquisition and the learning and teaching of vocabulary theoretically. Then the third chapter goes on with common difficulties, contrastive analysis and the problems of learning vocabulary encountered by SLIATE students. Findings and analysis are included in the fourth chapter followed by the conclusion in chapter five.

Key words: vocabulary, second language, difficulties, self-motivated, target group

4. Introduction:

Vocabulary plays a pivotal role in second language learning. The role of vocabulary in learning a second language is inevitable. Rich vocabulary will totally help students mastering English and its four major skills which cover listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Vocabulary is regarded as one of essential factors that gives a big influence to the students' communication. Vocabulary should be ideally placed as important aspect of language learning that should be given much attention in the practice of second language so as to improve students' vocabulary mastery. Most of the teachers realise that their students need to know vocabulary in order to function or master in English. But the best way to help the students learn this vocabulary most effectively remains an unresolved issue. Some scholars assert that sufficient vocabulary can be learnt simply from exposure to English, particularly reading. But some argue that much vocabulary needs to be taught. It is understood that maximum exposure to English, both inside and outside the classroom need to be considered and also teaching of selected vocabulary in the class room plays a vital role improving vocabulary among the students.

4.1 Background of the research:

English is an international language. It is spoken by many people in the world not just for the world's leaders, statesmen, and diplomats, all of whom are routinely required to master it. Millions of children on every continent now spend years studying the English language. Sri Lanka is no different in this regard. In the sense, the Sri Lankan government have decided to teach the English language from grade one to grade thirteen in their educational system. In addition to that, in the State universities and Higher Educational Institutes English is taught as a compulsory subject. Here the researcher has taken Sri Lanka Institute of Advanced Technological Education

(SLIATE) for the research - a Government Higher Educational Institute which offers a two and half year diploma in English program to the students who are not qualified to enter the state university, but are eligible to follow the diploma program at SLIATE. These students have learnt English in the government schools for thirteen years, but their knowledge of English is not up to the standard. So, the researcher has chosen these students for the research study and their level of English knowledge have been tested especially in learning vocabulary. Higher National Diploma in English program introduced by SLIATE gives ways for the students to learn four skills namely, reading, writing, speaking and listening. Under these four skills they are motivated to learn vocabulary as well. Teaching of English is considered as appropriate means of achieving the goals to equip them with the necessary knowledge and technical skills required for the modern employment market. Of course, this diploma program paves the way to the students to achieve their target. But still some areas need to be improved- that is, developing the knowledge of vocabulary among the students.

4.2 Justification for collaboration & brief information about national and international scenario in the proposed area of research:

These days, there is no doubting the fact that the English language is becoming something of a forerunner in global communication. It is the language of choice in most countries of the world. English is playing a very significant role in bringing the world together. Therefore, many people are involved in the job of teaching English to people. In spite of the heightened interest in the English language, teachers often face various difficulties and challenges while teaching English as a second language.

Vocabulary learning is an integral part of language teaching. How the vocabulary should be learned or acquired in Second language contexts is a question which needs further research studies. Recently, vocabulary teaching has become the topic of interest for many ESL teachers all around the world. Nam (2010: 127) stressed that "not only vocabulary supports the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, but also mediates between ESL students and content-area classes in that these students often find that lack of vocabulary knowledge is an obstacle to learning". Moreover, the more vocabulary an ESL learner acquires, the better communication he/she will have. There are a large number of strategies and techniques utilized by teachers in teaching vocabulary. These techniques are used to foster the ESL learners' ability to convey their intended meanings in different contexts and settings.

To communicate in English vocabulary plays a major role and without having stock of words no one can master this language. If learners do not acquire effective strategies for learning new vocabularies, they will be disappointed and will lose their self-confidence. Consequently, it is necessary for ESL teachers to familiarize students with new strategies and techniques which are used for vocabulary learning.

Having 20 year experience working as a Senior Lecturer at higher educational sector the researcher is personally motivated to do a research on vocabulary development proficiency in which many adult learners have lot of problems. A higher educational institute like SLIATE (Sri Lanka Institute of Advanced Technological Education) offers higher national diploma in English – a 2 ½ year course for the students who have successfully completed A/L in any stream and possess a credit pass in O/L English, are eligible to follow this course. In this HND in English curriculum the students are given an opportunity to learn the subject-Reading and vocabulary Development throughout the four semesters. The researcher has been teaching this subject for more than 20 years to the students at the above mentioned ATIs and she came across a lot of facts which are related to this vocabulary. This article is going to explain how adult learners undergo many difficulties in learning vocabulary and how they show their negligence to learn new words.

4.3 Scope of the research:

This study focuses on vocabulary learning and covers only diploma holders of English; and this diploma in English program is conducted at 17 Institutes. The researcher has planned to do the analysis only at three Institutes such as Dehiwala, Jaffna & Trincomalee due to some practical difficulties. There are 100 students following this diploma program at each ATI. From each ATI randomly 10 students will be selected from the first year and 10 students from the second year as samples.

For this research the sample of 60 students are assessed only due to the time frame and the quantitative method is used to analyse. The semester consists of 15 weeks and within this period the data should be collected and analysed.

The research would only investigate "how to develop vocabulary learning among diploma holders of English".

4.4 Research Problem:

In the literature of English language teaching and learning a recurring theme has been the neglect of vocabulary. This neglect sits uncomfortably with the significance placed on vocabulary learning by learners themselves. The neglect of vocabulary is also surprising in view of the fact that errors of vocabulary are potentially more misleading than those of grammar. It is also clear that the task of vocabulary learning is a substantial one for the second language learners. Despite the traditional neglect, recent years have shown a greater awareness of the questions which need to be addressed with regard to vocabulary learning:

- What strategies do learners use to acquire new words?
- How is a second language learner's mental lexicon organized and how does it develop over time?
- How do learners build an understanding of the relationship among words?

The answers to these questions clearly depend on insights obtainable from the research studies which the researcher is going to carry out. It must be clear that there is a huge barrier which always influences the second language learners to acquire the vocabulary during their course work.

The researcher felt the necessity of doing a research study on this topic because she has really experienced how the students respond to learning vocabulary and their attitudes towards English language. Therefore, the researcher's intention of doing this research study is to find out the problems they face in vocabulary acquisition in the second language. Finally, her intention is to propose possible solution to overcome those difficulties and problems faced by the students in improving the vocabulary.

4.5 Objectives of the Research:

Vocabulary acquisition is one of the most important aspects of language learning. One of the current trends in ELT is to give vocabulary priority, but this has not always been the case. For decades, traditional language teaching methods and approaches gave more importance to grammatical structures. However, as Wilkins (1972) points out, 'While without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed'. This statement shows us how it is important to learn vocabulary. So, this research paper is going to explain how adult learners show their negligence to learn vocabulary and thereby, how they are not successful to master the second language without having the stocks of words. At the end this article will give some solutions to overcome these problems and will show some ways how to improve the vocabulary in their day today life.

The objectives of this research are:

- To identify the barriers in learning the vocabulary
- To find out how do learners build an understanding of the relationships among words?
- To assess how adult learners of second language acquire vocabulary
- To identify the factors that influence in acquiring the vocabulary

To develop effective strategies for vocabulary learning

To encourage the learners to maintain the note book to improve the vocabulary

5. Literature Review:

The importance of learning vocabulary

Vocabulary knowledge is often viewed as a critical tool for second language learners because a limited vocabulary in a second language impedes successful communication. Underscoring the importance of vocabulary acquisition, Schmitt (2000) emphasizes that "lexical knowledge is central to communicative competence and to the acquisition of a second language" p. 55).

Nation (2001) further describes the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and language use as complementary: knowledge of vocabulary enables language use and, conversely, language use leads to an increase in vocabulary knowledge. The importance of vocabulary is demonstrated daily in and out the class room. In classroom, the achieving students possess the most sufficient vocabulary. Most of the researchers have realized that the acquisition of vocabulary is essential for successful second language use and plays an important role in the formation of complete spoken and written texts. In English as a second language (ESL) learning vocabulary items plays a vital role in all language skills (i.e. listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Rivers and Nunan (1991), furthermore, argue that the acquisition of an adequate vocabulary is essential for successful second language use because without an extensive vocabulary, we will be unable to use the structures and functions we may have learned for comprehensible communication. Research has shown that second language readers rely heavily on vocabulary knowledge and the lack of that knowledge is the main and the largest obstacle for L2 readers to overcome (Huckin, 1995). In production, when we have a meaning or concept that we wish to express, we need to have a store of words from which we can select to express this meaning or concept. Many researchers argue that vocabulary is one of the most important-if not the most important- components in learning English as a second language. Wilkins (1972) states that: "There is not much value in being able to produce grammatical sentences if one has not got the vocabulary that is needed to convey what one wishes to say ... While without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed" p97). Other International Journal of Teaching and Education Vol. III, No. 3 / 2015 22 scholars such as Richards (1980) and Krashen (1989), state many reasons for devoting attention to vocabulary. "First, a large vocabulary is of course essential for mastery of a language. Second language acquirers know this; they carry dictionaries with them, not grammar books, and regularly report that the lack of vocabulary is a major problem". On the other hand, vocabulary has been acknowledged as L2 learners' greatest single source of problems (Meara, 1980). This remark may possibly reflect that the open-endedness of a vocabulary system is perceived to be a cause of difficulty by learners. Another possible reason is that, unlike syntax and phonology, vocabulary does not have rules the learners may follow to acquire and develop their knowledge. In other words, it is not clear in L2 vocabulary learning what rules apply or which vocabulary items should be learned first. Oxford (1990) also claims that vocabulary is "by far the most sizeable and unmanageable component in the learning of any language, whether a foreign or one's mother tongue, because of tens of thousands of different meanings". Despite these difficulties that language learners face in L2 vocabulary, they still have to deal with it in their examinations as "vocabulary has traditionally been one of the language components measured in language tests" (Schmitt, 1999, 189). Furthermore, many learners see second language acquisition (SLA) as essentially a matter of learning vocabulary and therefore they spend a great deal of time on memorizing lists of L2 words and rely on their bilingual dictionary as a basic communicative resource. As a result, language teachers and applied linguists now generally recognize the importance of vocabulary learning and are exploring ways of promoting it more effectively. Some of this research takes the form of investigation of strategies learners use specifically for learning vocabulary which is our focus of attention.

Teaching Vocabulary to the adult learners

Teaching vocabulary recent research indicates that teaching vocabulary may be problematic because many teachers are not confident about the best practice in vocabulary teaching and at times do not know where to begin to form an instructional emphasis on word learning (Berne & Blachowicz, 2008). Teaching words is a crucial aspect in learning a language as languages are based on words (Thornbury, 2002). It is almost impossible to learn a language without words; even communication between human beings is based on words. Both teachers and students agree that acquisition of the vocabulary is a central factor in teaching a language (Walters, 2004). Teaching vocabulary is one of the most discussed parts of teaching English as a foreign language. When the teaching and

learning process takes place, problems would appear to the teachers. They have problems of how to teach students in order to gain satisfying results. The teacher should prepare and find out the appropriate techniques, which will be implemented to the students. A good teacher should prepare himself or herself with various and up-to-date techniques. Teachers need to be able to master the material in order to be understood by students, and make them interested and happy in the teaching and learning process in the classroom. The teachers should be concerned that teaching vocabulary is something new and different from student's native language. They also have to take into account that teaching English for young learners is different from adults. The teachers have to know the characteristics of his/her learners. They moreover need to prepare good techniques and suitable material in order to gain the target of language teaching.

6. Research Methodology:

The aim of this study is to examine the problems of learning vocabulary by the students in the ESL context. These students do learning in English medium in ESL setting of Higher National Diploma course. For this purpose a research method, the quantitative feature is chosen.

Data Collection

For this research quantitative data was collected from the 1st year and the 2nd year students of Higher National Diploma in English which is a two and half year program comprising 2 year course work and six month training program. The researcher has chosen three Advanced Technological Institutes such as Dehiwala, Jaffna & Trincomalee where three communities (Tamils, Sinhalese & Muslims) have been following this diploma course and their mother tongue is either Tamil or Sinhala.

The sample was 60 adult learners from both the first year and the second year course of three Institutes. The research instruments were such as structured questionnaires, pre-test and post-test on vocabulary based activities which were given to the students to assess their knowledge on vocabulary. These tests were used to measure the students' achievements on the particular lesson. A structured questionnaire was prepared focusing students' general information and the main themes of the research area.

The samples were taken from the students of Sri Lanka Institute of Advanced Technological Institutes-Dehiwala, Jaffna & Trincomalee where the researcher has taught the students and at present the researcher is attached to ATI/Dehiwala. For collecting data the samples were collected from 60 students from the first year & the second year both male and female at Advanced Technological Institutes. Also, the researcher plans to analyse the semester results of the students of this subject and the first and the second semester of the results have been compared. For this analysis charts and tables were used.

The selected students were clearly informed about the study and were given hardcopies of questionnaires (see Appendix A for a copy of the questionnaire) with 10 supply and selection type questions. The questionnaire was aimed to be informed about their family backgrounds which relates with Language Acquisition and the usage of English in their life. A discussion was then made on the 'Uses of English Language' and was encouraged to communicate in English throughout the process.

The students were administered with the pre- test paper with 100%. The paper had multiple choice questions, comprehensions passages, and word selection to answer in an hour. The pre-test paper was designed as an easily answerable paper as it was to encourage the students to concentrate and get engaged in the study enthusiastically. The paper was also giving a forecast on what and how the study they are engaged would be carried on. A week later, the sample group was met and was given an explanation on 'Affixes' and 'Word Classes' and how to interpret the meaning and the word class of different words through it. The sample group was then given a home work sheet named 'MY VOCABULARY SHEET'. Students were given activities related to affixes and word classes along with 10 words to look up in the Dictionary and to formulate a sentence each. The homework sheet was given a topic as 'MY VOCABULARY SHEET', to help the students revise what they learnt in the class regarding 'Affixes' and 'Word Classes', so they might understand the importance of them in improving their vocabulary skills and to self-realise how different words can be easily stored in memory and recall them in communication.

The third meeting with the sample group started with the discussion on "MY VOCABULARY SHEET", the homework sheet which was given in the prior week to revise on Affixes and Word Classes. The students were encouraged to speak on various topics related to the words given earlier. The students were able to understand the new vocabulary and to determine where the words should be used

in a sentence. The students were then given a mid-test paper for 100% to be done in one hour and a half. The mid test paper had multiple choice questions, synonyms, antonyms, comprehension passages and to construct sentences.

Finally, each student was given three comprehension passages with high-lighted words and was asked to read all the three passages everyday till they were to be met next time. The comprehension passages were given to the students to make them self-realise how reading as a habit may easily positively progress their vocabulary development and also their knowledge in grammar and sentence structure. The students were encouraged to make reading in English as a habit so that they could enhance and enrich their English skills in not only reading and improving their vocabulary but also in improving their English writing and speaking abilities.

Then the students were given the Post -Test paper designed for 100%. The paper had multiple choice questions, synonyms, antonyms, comprehension passages, sentence construction, jumbled words and puzzles to be done in two hours. The post-test paper was harder to answer compared to the pre-test and mid-test papers as the students were given necessary explanations and practises with improving their vocabulary.

Hence, the data collection procedure was completed with the questionnaire, the marks of pre-tests, mid- tests and post-tests.

Description of Data Analysis

When the data was analysed, many facts were found out. Quantitative methods are perhaps easy to define and discover. The numerical records produced were the marks of the students in the tests, and they were analysed with the usage of mathematical and statistical methods. Quantitative methods were followed to measure the knowledge on Vocabulary through a pre-test, mid-test and post-test.

In addition, the researcher wanted to introduce the mixed method which was more suitable for the study procedures as it was involved with both quantitative measures like analysing the test marks and qualitative measures like observing students English Vocabulary development through communication. The mixed method allowed the study to happen in a systematic flow and prepared and gave the students the correct concept of the study they were involved and to get the support of the students to achieve the objectives of the study.

7. Results and Discussion

The data analysis was done after the collection of all the necessary data to come to a conclusion regarding the Study English Vocabulary Development. The collected data was organised, interpreted and analysed through MS. Word and MS. Excel software and put into graphical presentations through statistical methods, graphs, and percentage. The data analysis is discussed below:

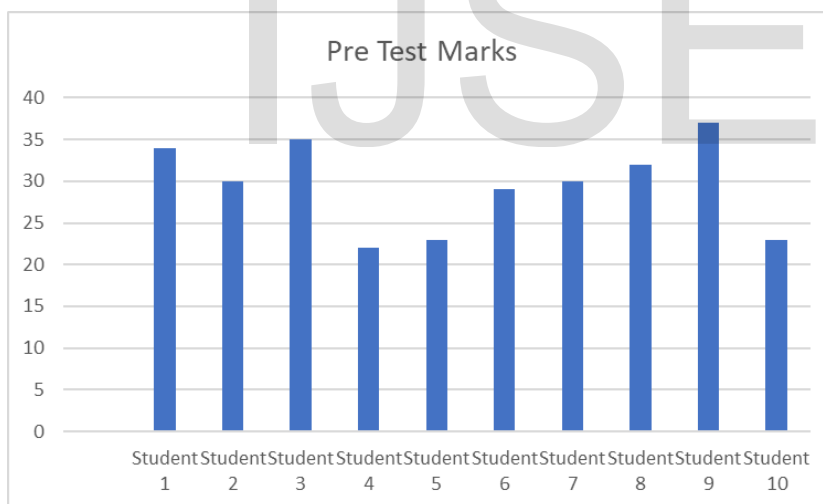
The Findings of the Questionnaire:

- Most students do not use English for their communication purposes.
- Many students' family members do not communicate in English often resulting in a poor English Language Acquisition in students.
- All the students have the habit of reading in English in any form and almost all the students have the habit of frequently reading in English.
- Half of the students have the habit of looking up the meaning of unknown words in dictionary while only three students look up the meaning of unknown words in the dictionary and also write them down.

- Only two students out of the 10 students use the newly learnt words in communication.
- All the students think they can converse in English easily if they know more words in English and many of them would like to improve their English-speaking abilities.
- All the students think knowing more English words would help them to get a job in the future.

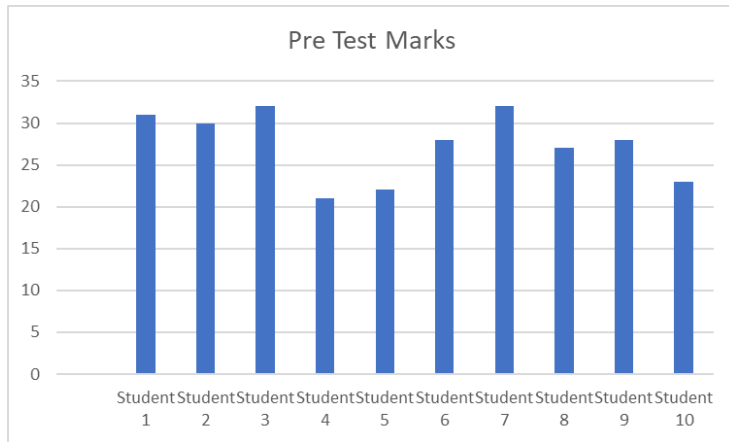
Description of Pre Test and Post Test in bar graphs ATI wise

Jaffna



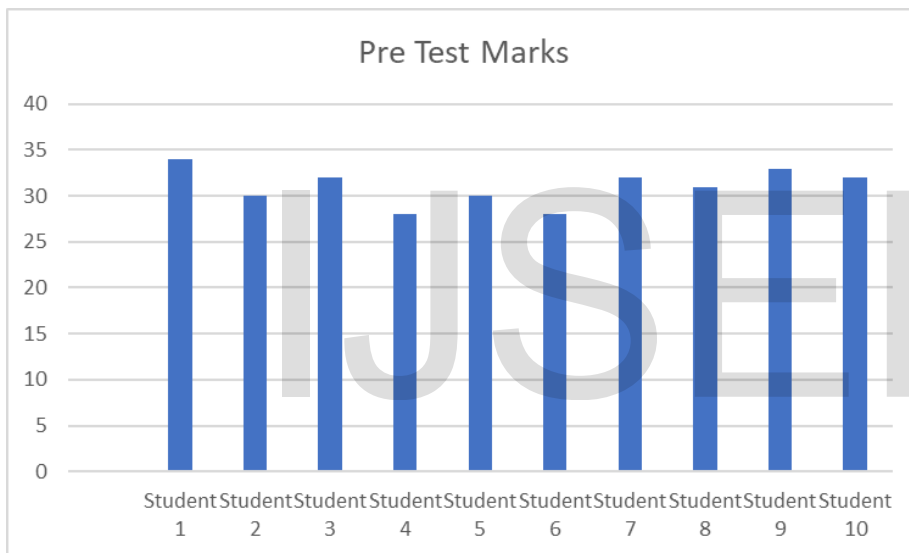
Student	Marks
Student 1	34
Student 2	30
Student 3	35
Student 4	22
Student 5	23
Student 6	29
Student 7	30
Student 8	32
Student 9	37
Student 10	23

Trincomalee



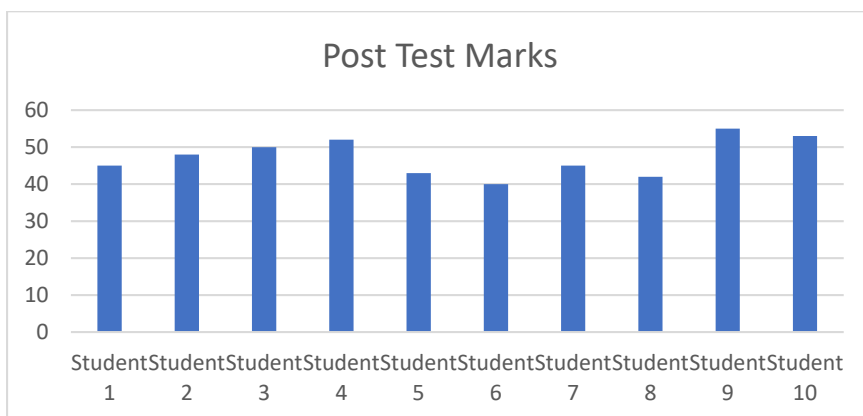
Student	Marks
Student 1	31
Student 2	30
Student 3	32
Student 4	21
Student 5	22
Student 6	28
Student 7	32
Student 8	27
Student 9	28
Student 10	23

Dehiwala



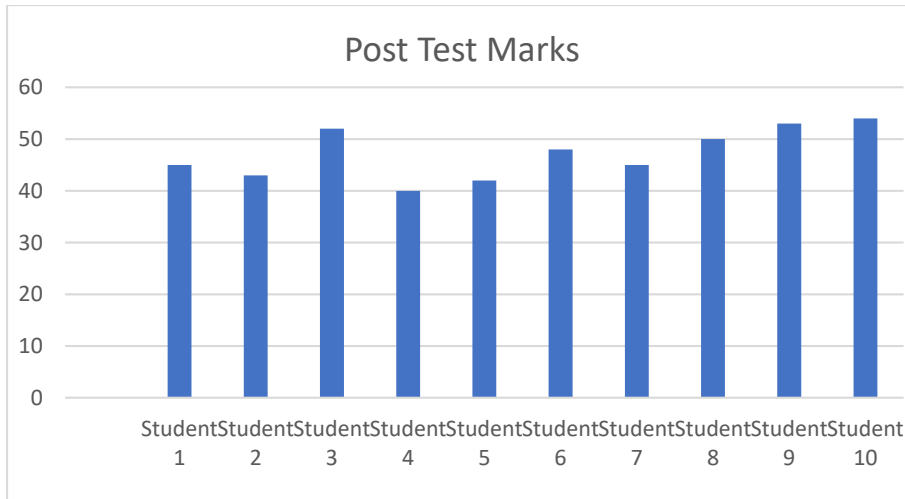
Student	Marks
Student 1	34
Student 2	30
Student 3	32
Student 4	28
Student 5	30
Student 6	28
Student 7	32
Student 8	31
Student 9	33
Student 10	32

Jaffna



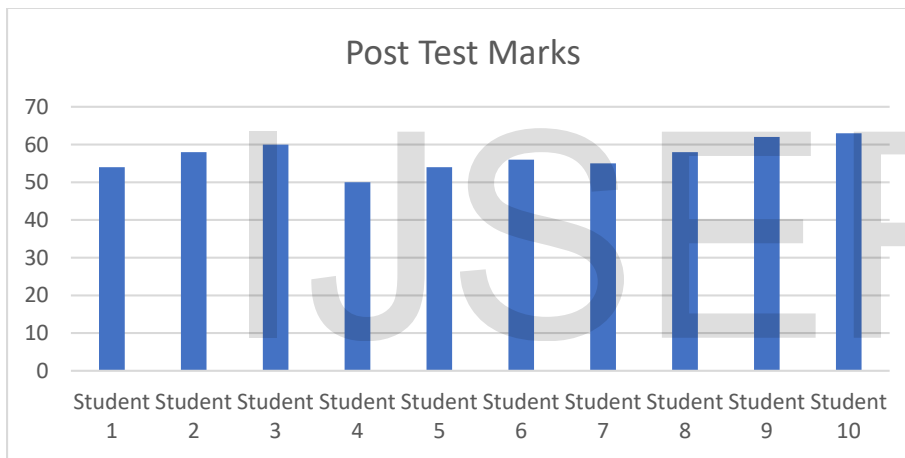
Student	Post Test Marks
Student 1	45
Student 2	48
Student 3	50
Student 4	52
Student 5	43
Student 6	40
Student 7	45
Student 8	42
Student 9	55
Student 10	53

Trincomalee



Student	Post Test Marks
Student 1	45
Student 2	43
Student 3	52
Student 4	40
Student 5	42
Student 6	48
Student 7	45
Student 8	50
Student 9	53
Student 10	54

Dehiwala



Student	Post Test Marks
Student 1	54
Student 2	58
Student 3	60
Student 4	50
Student 5	54
Student 6	56
Student 7	55
Student 8	58
Student 9	62
Student 10	63

The Findings of the Tests:

1. The average marks of the students in the pre-test are 34% without giving any explanations or instructions on the specific subject contents.
2. The average marks of the students in the mid-test are 56.4% after getting explanation on specific topics.
3. The average marks have increased by 12.5% from pre-test to mid test.
4. The average marks of the students in the post-test are 63% which was done finally. The average marks from pre-test to post-test have increased by 29% and average marks from mid-test to post-test have increased by 17.4%.

8. Conclusions, Recommendations & Limitations

The development of English Vocabulary is an unavoidable and essential part of every student all over the world to meet their future challenges effectively. It cannot only improve people's social life, but also better job opportunities in the future. Teachers and students have to take great measures to develop English vocabulary due to various difficulties they have to overcome in higher educational institutes such as limitedness of time, finance and to fulfil already set targets like completing the syllabus. These constraints cannot be eliminated in the practical situation without the help of the management of institutes or the administration of the education system. The students leave the school after their Advanced Level studying English Language for approximately 12 years but still are unsatisfied with their English Language Outcomes to meet with the English dominating job market who give preference to fluent speakers of English. Hence, it is very crucial to encourage students to develop their English vocabulary to meet their dreams by memorizing new words, trying to interpret the meaning of unknown words and formulating their own communication through it.

Students should be encouraged to communicate in English by making them understand that by only practising English Language in practical life in a daily basis will allow them to achieve fluency and also get bold to make mistakes and correct the mistakes through further learning. Students should be motivated to make the habit of reading in English because that directly helps to understand grammar and sentence structure and also learn new vocabulary and to interpret the meaning of words according to their usage in sentences. Students should be encouraged to write down the new words they come across and also write the meaning of the words. This can be also developed into a hobby for the students

Hence, as the study has demonstrated that students can improve their English Vocabulary by creating a habit of reading various documents in English and through habitual reading the meaning of unknown words can be interpreted with the usage of the word in a sentence and write the new words with their meanings they come across in their daily life and to use the new words in communication so the words are recalled and firmly stored in the memory.

Recommendations & Limitations

- In parallel to the research findings it is clear that reading and encouraging the students to read various texts and familiarising the students with English Language through reading, enhances the students' vocabulary in English. Hence, the lecturers have to assign tasks related to reading and understanding various documents in English and discuss the texts in class at least once a month.
- Lecturers are advised to understand that acquisition of a language or development of vocabulary cannot be done with the time allocated to them. Therefore, lecturers should make students realise the situation and give extra activities which may encourage students to learn new vocabulary by giving crossword puzzles, jumbled letters, listening to songs and writing lyrics and by showing Short Films in English.
- The students are recommended to maintain a separate booklet to write the new words and their meanings when they identify an unknown word and to revise and use the newly learnt words in communication.
- Speaking in English only should be made mandatory and the English Class should be more of Learner-Centred Classroom.
- A day can be set to communicate in English every week even in other subjects or take about two hours in every week and hold class wise quizzes, debates, games, fun tests or speaking sessions in order to improve English Vocabulary.
- Future researchers may develop books where students can write the new words and have various activities like writing the meanings, synonyms, antonyms and word class to be more suitable in a text-book oriented classroom.
- A reading journal should be maintained by the students and weekly it should be checked by the particular lecturer.
- A vocabulary note book should be maintained by the students and per day the new words that they learnt in the class room should be written in the note book.

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APPENDIX A QUESTIONNAIRE

This study is being conducted by me, Mrs.S.Subhakaran, Senior Lecturer/English at SLIATE, Dehiwala. This is a questionnaire survey based on the topic “Developing Vocabulary learning among Diploma Holders of English”. The questionnaire is designed to get to know how students use English vocabulary in their life. The questionnaire will take you around 15 minutes.

This study is done for educational purposes only and not for any commercial purposes. This questionnaire is completely anonymous and your privacy is prevailed.

1. Gender Male Female

2. Do you communicate in English outside Institute?
Yes No

3. Do your parents or any other family members communicate in English often?
Yes No

4. Do you have the habit of reading in English?

(For example: Books, newspapers, novels or social media)

Yes No

5. How often do you read any texts in English?

Daily Weekly once Weekly twice
Once a Month

6. Do you find the meaning of the words you do not know in the dictionary?

Yes No

7. Do you have the habit of writing down the meaning of unknown words?

Yes No

8. How often do you use the newly learnt words in communication?

Very often Sometimes Rarely

9. Do you think if you know more English words that you will be able to converse in English easily?

Yes No

10. Why do you think you want to learn new English words?

To improve my English when -
Speaking
Writing
Reading

11. Do you think knowing more English words will help you to find a job easily?

Yes No