# Teaching Vocabulary to Engineering Students through Movies

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Language is not merely a means of expression and communication; it is an instrument of experiencing, thinking, and feeling. Our ideas and experiences are not independent of language; they are all integral parts of the same pattern, the warp and woof of the same texture. We do not first have thoughts, ideas, feelings, and then put them into a verbal framework. We think in words, by means of words. Language and experience are inextricably interwoven, and the awareness of one awakens the other. Words and idioms are as indispensable to our thoughts and experiences as are colors and tints to a painting (Chomsky, 1957, p.3).

Thus are the words of Professor William Chomsky, father of the controversial Noam Chomsky, as he expresses his thoughts on the supreme importance of language.

Language, and thus the need to acquire vocabulary in a language, is pivotal to the whole of human experience. It connects individuals one to another, bridging meaning between that which is intended as communication to that which is understood. Also, language is an instrument of thought, which in turn, affects perception, thus defining our everyday experiences. Scholar Steven Pinker (1994) explains this closely intertwined relationship of language and human experience, by emphasizing that humans are most likely to be in communication one with another rather than silent. Because language pervades daily human activity, it is impossible to isolate language from experience.

Vocabulary is central to language and is of great significance to language learners. Words are the building blocks of a language since they label objects, actions, ideas without which people cannot convey the intended meaning.

A survey of L2 students taking university courses found that they identified vocabulary as a major factor that held them back in academic writing tasks (Leki & Carson.1994). However, factors affecting vocabulary learning is very complicated, including individual and contextual factors.

**Movies and Their Effects**
The scope of movies in a classroom scenario transforms a moribund class into a visually dynamic, triggering interest and is a high motivation enhancer for scholars. According to Harmer (2001, 2007), there are a number of reasons why videos should be used:

- Seeing language-in-use: one of the advantages is that by watching and hearing input simultaneously general meanings and moods are often conveyed through expressions, gestures and other visual clues.
- Cross-cultural awareness: watching videos help students see the situations beyond their language classroom. For instance, they learn the typical British "body language" or they see how an American talks to a waitress.
- The power of creation: when students watch movies and video themselves and they can create a more memorable and enjoyable learning environment.

- Motivation: students definitely get more pumped up when they have a chance of not only hearing language input but also using it.

**Entertainment Quotient vs. Learning Quotient**
"An eye is powerful than an ear" (Sherman, 2003)

While using a film in the classroom to help learn English various areas other than words get attention like accent, voice, body language, training ear and the eye, lifestyle, plot idea, summary, what's going on, why and how, and many other things depending on the aim. The overall aim has always been to maximize comprehension and learn more English. Classrooms often become claustrophobic when the teacher has to complete the course conduct tests revise the taught matter and keep doing complex learning activity when she is constantly being reminded of the grey area where the scholar lacks fluency about understanding of the idea or the thought because of the simple reason that the scholar does not have the proverbial vocabulary tank. If the curriculum is carefully studied and understood it will be seen that attention is paid to vocabulary but when it is dealt in the classroom it becomes so diluted that the effect on students of its impact and importance is virtually negligible. Words and its importance is well understood when scholars need to carry on conversation for more than ten minutes and it's a struggle to search for words and speak or they have to write a 250 word essay which is almost like a Herculean task for them not because they lack ideas but lack words that would express their ideas. In an Engineering College where students are into technical associations and learning the importance of English for them is not paramount. But for placements having fluency of speech and clarity in expressions of thought is measured high. Meaning and usage of words is so difficult and their vocabulary bank also doesn't show any reserve of words to express their thoughts which leads to a dismal performance. These results always leads to low confidence, high anxiety levels, low self esteem and loss of interest in English. It is a great challenge for the teachers of technical institutions to bring students to practice English and these results make it a mammoth task to get scholars interested and motivated to learn English with pleasure. So regular medium of instruction has to be altered and new formats and unconventional means need to be adopted. Movies are easily accessible medium and have always been a strong stimulus with regard to motivating and teaching students. But watching a full feature film needs more time than teaching hours. So, the movie needs to fit into a classroom schedule, organizing different activities that help this aim.

**MOTIVE, MOTIVATION AND MOVIES**
The study that was conducted was to see and decide the basic factor if learning actually became a part of the classroom instruction or was it lost to the power of 70mm screen. The motive was to introduce a word list of 80-100 words, observe their reactions and refrain from teacher control and make the class a democratic classroom where knowledge sharing is 'of', 'for' and 'by' the students. The main material is an

animation movie—Ratatouille which is the winner of the 2008 Oscar Best Animated Feature Film of the Year. With the interesting stories and vivid animations, such a movie would be attractive to students. The movie also presents a number of animated action words which can be very useful to describe routine actions. The students were grouped into two and one group was provided with the movie and the other with the script of the movie.

## RESULT

The controlled group was provided with the movie script showed huge variations but the growth and development of vocabulary has definitely taken place for there has been a continuous growth. Figure 1.1 clearly marks the development of the students throughout the process.

The diagnostic test clearly shows huge dips and high but the I test does not show such huge variations this clearly goes on to show that there has been a considerable amount of teaching learning process. As mentioned in the observations that before the second test the students had shown some amount of retard ness towards learning that has shown variation in the test I and II.
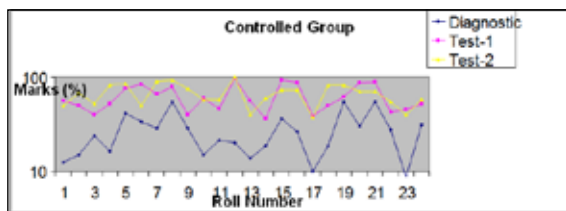


**Figure: 1.1 Comparative study of the three test of controlled group**

The group that viewed the movie clearly showed huge variation initially but not like the first group. The diagnostic test was where there were maximum deviations. But the I and the II test were showing consistency and the variation between these two test was least as compared to the tests taken by the controlled group. This goes on to show that movies are a very strong medium of instruction. As discussed earlier it is clearly proven that the instructor played a passive role in the classroom. The students actively participated in the learning process which is clearly shown in test I and II. The way they have understood, recalled and used the vocabulary clearly shows that movies in classroom can be a strong and motivating factor to learn a language without compromising on the interest element. As observed during the observations it motivated students to register for the test and they willingly attended the class in fact they were before time for the class.
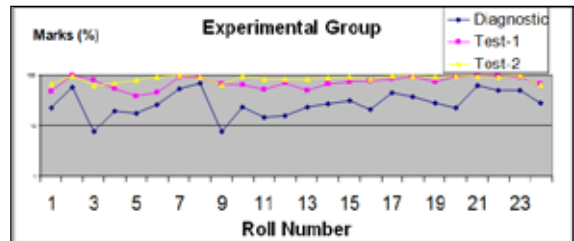


**Figure 1.2 Comparative studies of the three tests of the experimental group.**

## LIMITATIONS

Movies are a strong instructional medium and have been a constant source of entertainment. When this value of entertainment is brought into the traditionally cushioned walls of the classroom it is bound to evoke interest and curiosity among the learners. There are multifarious advantages of teaching with movies but this potent media does come with its share of limitations.

The high entertainment value of movies can hinder actual learning process if viewed constantly for an instructor needs to overcome the students' tendency to "read smart and view dumb," that is their tendency to see films as entertainment rather than as learning texts.

Selecting movies in relation to the target words for a heterogeneous class is a difficult task. Not all the words present in their curriculum can be found in a movie.

Most of the movies deal with controversial themes so to showcase such movies becomes a difficulty. The students might get caught in the loopholes of the plot and loose complete focus of the language aspect that is being given through the movies.

## CONCLUSION

Learning needs to be made into an engaging joyful activity for all. When learning is aided with a strong medium of entertainment it creates an ambience that facilitates teaching and learning and motivates the students to become independent learners. Repeated exposure may provoke far more language learning as Chung and Read (2007) discovered that repeating the same input was the most effective.

Introducing vocabulary and viewing it back and discussing it in the classroom definitely enhances the knowledge and they can recall it in connection with the movie that they have viewed.

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