

News Headline Study as an Extra-class Activity to Learn Vocabulary for Economics Students

Hashem Maleki

PN University of Iran (Iran)

omaleki@gmail.com

Abstract

During this study I tried to direct my students' attention to the common vocabulary in recent economics news headlines, an activity along with their textbooks studies (PN University of Iran, English for Economics Students). The major English background of the students of this class (23 students) has been the one provided by the General National Education during the K-12 period, which is normally taught in a way similar to the famous GTM Method [3].

Maleki and Zangani (2007) posit that one of the main problems of Iranian EFL students is their inability to communicate and handle English after graduating from university [2]. The fact that these students do not embrace English, according to students' self-reports are due to: 1. Lack of enough English grounding and therefore, inability to follow the content in their textbooks, and 2. Lack of an immediate real-life relevance of the content, since Iran is an EFL learning context [1]. In fact they learn English just to demonstrate their "performance which makes evident to which they demonstrate their knowledge of language rules" [4], rather than with a view of the possible real applications of language.

Prior to each session, the author/ teacher selected the key words in recent news headlines. Toward the end of each class session, after getting the main textbook treatment over, a 15 minute session was assigned to serve the purpose of the study, i.e. to encourage them take English as more than just an academic pre-requisite course. 11 students opted not to participate in these special sessions, leaving us a sample of 12 students.

The headlines were extracted from recent TV and newspaper news reports on economic issues. Presenting the headlines and discussing the vocabulary and expressions inside the sentences gave the students a limited but immediate sense regarding the possible application of what they were learning and its relation to the real world. The lack of a sense of immediate (if any) use of what they are learning relating foreign language education is a common issue in EFL situations like Iran's. So the anticipated gains would be a more accurate language competence and an affective sense toward the language itself as an identity-bound construct. This is because the English the Iranian students learn during the junior high school and high school years is context-reduced to a great extent.

Their scores on a test covering the content presented during the 15 minute sessions and their correlation with the scores on the national exam covering their textbook indicates that they have benefited from the special sessions.

References

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