Needs Analysis Research Project of Aviation English Students; What Are The Basic Needs Regarding Vocabulary Learning?

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to analyze the motivation and the reason behind why people, who are aiming to work in a specific field, feel the need to learn or improve their English and what should be the main goals of the classes they are taking compared to their area/field of work. This paper focuses on the results of a need analysis study conducted in a private institution and discusses the needs of the students who are working in the Aviation industry in terms of vocabulary. Due to the terminology and specific phrases that are used in an aircraft, the target language differs from the traditional use of speech in daily English, we for the main purpose of the study will be analyzing and detecting what aviation students need to focus on regarding the use of the vocabulary and phrases and what the main problems are in vocabulary learning. The study was conducted in a private institution and the subjects were 40 Civil Aviation Cabin Services students. The instruments that were used for data collection were a needs assessment scale and a focus-group interview. The study aims to reveal the areas of need in terms of vocabulary usage and the problematic areas that students are facing as well as their expectations from their English classes.

1. Introduction

In recent years, numerous studies have been carried out to reveal what factors motivate students to work in the Aviation sector and why they feel the need to improve their English regarding this field. Aviation industry is developing rapidly but unfortunately the importance of the sector is not known adequately. Countries need more and more transportation vessels in order to keep up with the growing number of people looking for a quicker way to travel to different locations in the world; this situation has so far worked especially for the benefit of the airlines and airports which provide the fastest way of travel for the traveling population. In addition to that, the need to employ staff members in this field such as flight attendants, pursers and other cabin crew members has increased rapidly and this fact has also become evidence to the importance of the Aviation sector which was, prior to this day, underestimated by many.

Despite all these factors that emphasize the significance of the Aviation field and the necessity to know about lack of study that has been done in the relevant area, there seems to be a very limited number of studies conducted in this field. All these reasons motivated us to work on such a study related to ESP and the problems that are faced by both the teachers and the students.

1.1. The Usage of Chunks and Specific Phrases

As it is known, one of the biggest problems that learners have to face is to know how to combine the individual words with each other to make a meaningful sentence. To overcome this difficulty, many linguists and educators have suggested applying vocabulary learning in chunks to the learners. Some examples that are commonly seen in the textbooks for cabin crew members are as follows:

- *Fasten* your seatbelt.
- Please *fold* your tray tables.
- *Put* your seats in the *upright* position.

With the help of knowing how to appropriately form the chunks, it becomes much easier for the learners to bring individual words together in order to communicate with speakers of different languages. Chunking is the process of combining words and phrases that work together in order to create a meaningful sentence. The importance of chunk usage and awareness along with the ability to identify where and how to use them are crucial when it comes to ESP learning. Even if one lacks the necessary grammar and lexis, understanding the basics of chunking will help becoming more aware of the general idea about the meaning of the target language and knowing proper chunking will also help improving the grammar and understanding, or guessing meaning, of the written and spoken language.

"The practice and application of lexical chunks assist students to write and communicate better and they should be able to differentiate high-frequency and low-frequency vocabulary items.

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Language fluency and accuracy is mostly accomplished by recalling and bringing together pre-made chunks of language and it is a common belief by many language users." (Kavaliauskienë and Janulevièienë, 2000).

1.2. Guessing Meaning

Consulting in dictionaries is not the only way of eliciting the meaning of a word and in addition to that, the use of dictionaries is believed to negatively affect the smooth continuity of the targeted language action due to the interruption caused by taking a break to look up a word.

"Instead of dictionary use, guessing has been advised as a better tool because stopping to use a dictionary interrupts the flow of reading." (Brown, 1972).

Guessing meaning is commonly used and also taught under the name of "guided discovery" because one does not have to know every single word in the sentence to understand the general idea of what is being written or spoken, the meaning of an unknown vocabulary can be guessed via looking at the sentence from a wider angle. Even the native speakers of a language do not have to know every single word in existence.

"It is believed that guessing strategy is about generalized skills of deciphering the surrounding text, foretelling and examining the foretelling while reading, which improves reading skills as a whole" (Coady & Nation, 1988).

However, from time to time learners, mainly less advanced, have difficulties in trying to guess the meaning of a word when it is encountered while reading a text. There are other ways to help the learner grasp the meaning better such as visuals. It is a useful tool to expose the learners to visual elements such as guessing the meaning from flashcards, hand gestures and so on. As Clark and Lyons state, the visual support of images had been acknowledged to act as a greater help when compared to the impact of just using explanatory words (Clark and Lyons, 2004). Carney and Levin also believes that instead of direct translation and extra explanation of the unknown lexis, the visual materials serve as an effective scaffold for the learner (Carney and Levin, 2002) and in addition to that, Mannan claims that these aids assist the teacher in correlation and coordination when it comes to the accuracy of the concept and obtaining a more solid learning (Mannan 2005, p.108). Visuals such as videos on real life scenarios are always a good way to help the learner process the meaning. This method of learning how to guess the meaning arises from the fact that it is much more challenging for learners to visualize the new vocabulary in mind in their abstract form but when the link between the word and the meaning is supported via concrete factors like visual aids, it becomes much easier to build a stronger bridge in between. In this sense, Feuntein supports the idea of Carney and Levin regarding the unnecessary use of direct translation and suggest that visuals such as videos and pictures are just as good and more affective when it comes to build a concrete connection between L1 and L2 (Feuntein, 1995).

1.3. Pronunciation

Since aviation industry is an international work of field, airline companies tend to hire not only local but also foreign staff as cabin crew members and pilots as well as having passengers from different nations. Taleb Rifai, the secretary and general or the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), states that there is a tremendous growth – from 25 million tourists in 1950 to 990 million in 2011 - regarding the international tourism over the last decade and adds on by stating that there is an expectancy or 23 million more tourists traveling by air each year between current date and 2030 (World Tourism Organization, 2012). This means that the importance of a second language, in this case; English which is considered to be internationally accepted, is crucial and there for extremely necessary in order to build an appropriate and accurate communication between the passengers and the staff members in general. Having an accurate pronunciation that is universally produced and accepted plays a major role in clearly negotiate what is being spoken. In her article, Joan Morley talks about the significance of pronunciation and how it affects the way discourse is affected. She states that Strevens (1988) provides an estimated number of people in the world who uses English for specific purposes vary between 750 million to a billion and a half. These numbers are enough evidence to point out the importance of knowing how to use the language, in this case English, along with knowing how to properly use every other aspect of the language such as pronunciation, pragmatics, speech acts and so on. It is a main issue to have a good amount of accuracy and a clear pronunciation due to eliminating misunderstandings related to mispronunciation of a certain word or the false application of stress rhythm and intonation that may cause a difference in meaning. Researchers of the field have also acknowledged the significance on accuracy and fluency and there have been some changes on language focuses; the ideology of perceiving language as a formal system had been altered into seeing it as both formal and functional in order to fulfill the communicative needs of the language users in general. (Halliday, 1970, 1973, 1978). On a different note, it is not logical to expect a perfect "native-like" pronunciation that

affects the accent from a language learner who is not native. A question that comes to mind is; "which accent should be taken into account as the main and most widely accepted?" There are many countries who uses English as their national language such as; England (UK, Scotland, Wales and Ireland), North America (USA and Canada), Australia, etc. All these countries use English as their language and all of them have a specific accent that is different in both form and phonetics. The best way to answer this question and to find a common ground is to agree on the fact that having a clear and proper pronunciation is more important and necessary than having a specific accent. A second question is; "what affects pronunciation?" There are some main factors that influence the way people speak and mainly all of them are due to the L1 interference such as intonation, stressing, assimilation, fossilization, dissimilation, deletion, epenthesis, linking and friendly word interference where the same word exists in both languages with different pronunciations (eg. Cinema). As an example, according to the rating scale provided by Turkish Airlines, in the vocabulary section, the influence of using L1 should not often interfere with the meaning. That means pronunciation should not be influenced by regional accents (Turkish Airlines English Rating Scale).

2. Methodology
2.1. Setting and Participants
For the research study, Fatih Sultan Mehmet Foundation University, which has two year-program called Civil Aviation Cabin Services, was chosen. There were 40 participants who already had general English knowledge before since they were taught Basic English in two different levels (elementary and pre-intermediate) in the previous year. The age range was between 18 and 26.

2.2. Data Collection Instruments
To conduct the study, a needs assessment scale and a focus-group interview were given to the participants. The interview, which was done selecting 6 students (3 males and 3 females) from the needs assessment scale group of 40 people, included three open-ended questions measuring what students' biggest needs are in vocabulary learning process, what can be the reasons for misunderstanding in verbal communication of aviation field; and their suggestions on how to make vocabulary learning in aviation more qualified. And the needs assessment scale was made of 20 items to be marked by the students with the numbers 1-5. Here 1 is the lowest, meaning 'I strongly disagree' whereas 5 is the highest point they can mark, meaning 'I strongly agree'.

2.3. Data Collection Procedure
Participants' consent was obtained before they participated in the study. They were all applied the same needs assessment scale which was in advance prepared only in English language. Each item included in the needs assessment scale was meticulously read and carefully analyzed. The most frequently given points to each item were found. What the participants most disagree with was revealed; and these scores were compared with one another to have a knowledge of which items dominate the others. In addition, participants' comments to the open-ended questions of the interview were used in analyzing the findings. The interview questions were asked to the students in Turkish, which is their native language, to be able to obtain more reliable results; their comments were transcribed; and then were translated into English for the best quality of the study.

3. Results
In this section, the data gathered through two instruments, the needs assessment scale and focus-group interview; were analyzed and supported by direct quotations of the participants.

3.1. Interviews
Six Civil Aviation Cabin Services students were interviewed as focus group at the end of the spring semester of the academic year 2015-2016. The main points of the interview were what they needed in vocabulary, if they had ever had experienced any misunderstanding in verbal communication and the reasons for this; and what should be done to make vocabulary learning process in aviation more qualified. Therefore, the questions below were asked to structure the interview:
1. What is your biggest need of vocabulary?

2. Have you ever experienced any misunderstanding while communicating verbally in aviation sector? Briefly explain. If yes, Is it because of: Usage on non-standard phraseology? Poor level of English? Unclear pronunciation?

3. Do you have any suggestions to make vocabulary learning in aviation more qualified, successful and easier?

4. Discussion and Conclusion

4.1. Questionnaire

When compared to the importance of skills learning in English teaching classrooms for Aviation students, the participants believe that learning vocabulary is more important than learning the other components of the English language. At the same time, it is commonly agreed that the participants' English vocabulary knowledge is sufficient when it comes to communicating with others in an effective way. This indicates that it is not a problem for the students to find the appropriate vocabulary when it comes to communicating but it is hard to determine if there is a problem with the input and output of specialized vocabulary that is used for specific purposes, in this case, the lexis used in the field of aviation.

In the literature review section, the quote by Paul Nation (2001) states that learners should master 2000-3000 words of general usefulness in English prior to learning the vocabulary of specialized areas. The students clearly state that when it comes to vocabulary knowledge, they do not face any problems. The results also demonstrate that guessing the meanings of unknown words is not considered as a problem however when it comes to people who are speaking too fast, they fail to catch the meaning while communicating. There for the main reason for not being able to make up the meaning in some situations is not vocabulary related but more due to outside factors such as the speed of the conversation.

As for the materials used, The results indicate that in general, the materials for vocabulary teachings seems to be considered as insufficient but the materials that are selected for the course in general seems to satisfy the needs and expectations of the participants. Under the "guessing meaning" section, the importance of visual material usage is mentioned. As Clark and Lyons and Carney and Levin suggest that using visuals will have a stronger impact than just explaining the unknown word orally and will act as an effective scaffold for the learner. Therefore it is possible that the students might need more materials when it comes to learning the meaning of a word but when seen from a wider perspective, it is not that big of a problem to affect the results. The results also indicate that half of the students agree that their classroom is adequately equipped while most of them are satisfied with the teachers usage of various vocabulary teaching techniques. Regarding the material dissatisfaction, it is not a teacher related problem but more about the facility lacking the appropriate equipments from time to time The results also suggest that learning vocabulary in chunks is a more useful method. Specifically, Civil Aviation Cabin Services students are happier when the introduction of vocabulary part by is taught in chunks.

The main reason for the students to face a problem when it comes to speaking and reading is due to the lack of confidence when encountering words that are unknown. The results highlight this issue by stating that most of them feel the need to know every single word while reading or speaking of they fail to proceed completely. Even though most of them are successful at understanding almost every word that is used in a conversation, they still feel the need to use dictionaries for the words they fail to understand and this once again is related to the fact that participants feel the need to be in complete control over every single word that is used rather than getting the general idea and meaning of the conversation which would still be sufficient.

In the pronunciation analysis, the results indicate that having a native-like pronunciation is very important when it comes to communicating in aviation field and also the participants state that their regional accents do not affect their pronunciation. In Joan Morley's article, she talks about the significance of pronunciation and how it affects discourse. The literature review also supports this idea and states that having an accurate pronunciation that is universally accepted is crucial when it comes to being able to clearly negotiate with speakers of different language backgrounds. Considering the L1 usage playing a role on pronunciation in English, the results show that L1 usage sometimes affects their pronunciation along with affecting the meaning of the chosen words.

4.2. Interviews

4.2.1. Understanding the students' needs and problems in vocabulary learning

Regarding the focus group interview results of the study, six Civil Aviation Cabin Services students regarding vocabulary studies were interviewed. Their answers indicated that when it comes to sentence structures, combining words to get a meaning was challenging for them. One reason for this outcome is due to the number of technical terms existing in the aviation field. The pressure of remembering them combined with knowing how to appropriately use them to form a sentence, raised the anxiety levels and resulted in participants' and having difficulty with the issue.

The results also showed that the participants were able to guess the meaning from the context and understand the general idea, which can be seen as a having a positive impact over the difficulty that is faced by the students. A possible explanation for this can be due to the fact that seeing a word being used in a sentence supported by sample sentences helps relating to the meaning.

In the light of the results, the reasons behind misunderstanding verbal communications can be explained via three main focus points: usage on non-standard phraseology, poor level of English, and unclear pronunciation. As it is also argued in the previous sections, the lack of proper pronunciation skills may negatively affect the learners' self-confidence, credibility and ability via limiting social interactions (Pourhosein Gilakjani, 2012). It is crucial to maintain a positive and productive social interaction. The results taken from the interview stated that the limited knowledge of English language and the unfamiliarity with the pronunciations of the words that sounds familiar resulted in having to face problems in communication. So we can say that not only poor level of English but also poor level of understanding what speakers with different accents are saying may cause miscommunication. Considering the results, another problem that the students faced was having difficulty in understanding their teachers who came from different places that spoke with a different accent from one another and that also resulted in misunderstandings while they were learning. Another main reason regarding pronunciation issues is that students did not feel comfortable with pronouncing a word that was either too long or too hard.

Regarding the results for the phraseology usage, participants stated that they had difficulty with some words due to that fact that the meaning can be multiple. When an unfamiliar meaning is used for a familiar word, they cannot relate to or understand the meaning, which causes communication errors. The confusion of which meaning to choose for the exact same word is challenging for them since they are not in complete awareness of how to use the language.

4.2.2. Recommendations on further vocabulary learning

Apart from pronunciation, the results of the interview suggest that visual elements play a big role in learning vocabulary and remembering it for further use. Participants suggested that when unknown vocabulary is introduced, visuals on Power Point can help the learner. Also they stated that when the word is used in a sentence, the grasping of the meaning becomes clearer.

Another possible solution for lexis studies is repetition. Repeating the words and the sentences including them is appreciated by the students. Apart from visual, the use of technology was also emphasized. It was indicated that watching English TV shows, documentaries and series were a great help regarding the improvement on both pronunciation and getting familiar with word and phrases.

As it has been stated before, there are approximately 750 million to 1 and a half billion people in the world who uses English for specific purposes. (Strevens 1988) The importance of knowing how to use this universal language along with knowing how to properly apply this know-how such as pronunciation, pragmatics, speech acts and so on, is crucial because even the simplest error can cause a critical miscommunication especially in fields such as the aviation field that is closely related to human safety regarding transportation. That is why the results section plays an important role by shining a light on the areas that need attention from the vantage point of people who work within the sector.

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