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Contextualising the Teaching of Vocabulary

Sanjay Goyal

It is a proven fact that vocabulary is an important aspect of everyday communication. It is even more important than the aspect of grammar. "While without grammar *very little* can be conveyed, without vocabulary *nothing* can be conveyed" (Wilkins 1972, pp. 111-12). We normally think of vocabulary items as nouns, verbs, adjectives and so on. Indeed, these items contain more information than the grammatical elements of a language. For example, telegrams often consist of no more than a sequence of lexical items with almost no grammatical information and yet we have no difficulty understanding them. Every day, we come across many ungrammatical headlines and advertisements and still understand them without much difficulty. This shows that one can communicate in a foreign language with lesser difficulty provided one is equipped with appropriate vocabulary. Without the necessary vocabulary, communication is almost impossible. Admittedly, communication primarily based on vocabulary can be no more than a very rudimentary form of communication. Such communication is restricted to what it can achieve. It heavily depends on the willingness of the listener to allow the speaker to make grammatical errors. However, a speaker could achieve very little of communication, if equipped *only* with grammatical structures but *not enough* essential vocabulary.