

**Developing Lexical Competence
in the Process of Learning English as a Second Language**



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Abstract

The focus of this research is on the lexical development of students' learning English as their second language (L2). The majority of students who receive their primary and secondary education in their mother tongue find it difficult to pursue their tertiary education in English as the medium of instruction due to lack of proficiency in their second language. Insufficient vocabulary has been identified as one of the major factors that adversely affect their studies. As revealed from data obtained by a questionnaire, it was found that the students had an extremely low exposure to the L2 particularly where reading is concerned. Literature was reviewed paying attention to the methods of developing lexical competence (LC) of the students which is recognized as a major factor in L2 learning. In the past, it was not given much priority when preparing syllabi but lately it has come to be regarded as a key factor in 2nd language teaching. This research was focused on developing lexical competence of students pursuing engineering education at the University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka. A specific vocabulary course was designed to develop the LC of the participants, which was incorporated into their general English programme. It was intended to develop the breadth and depth of their lexicon. In the teaching process, the Lexical Approach was also employed to develop their language proficiency. A diagnostic Language test (Pre-test) was conducted prior to the commencement of the programme to assess the students' L2 proficiency. The duration of the course was 26 weeks. During this period learners were assessed continuously based on the specified language course. A post test was administered at the end of the course, the results were compared and the improvement gained was assessed. The results revealed a significant improvement in their LC which substantiated the hypothesis that improving LC had a positive impact on learners' overall language proficiency.

Keywords: Lexical Competence, Second language learners, Language proficiency, Lexicon, Higher education