Word Recognition among PSU College Students

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Abstract - *This study intended to determine the level of ability of 43 freshman Bachelor of Arts in English Language students in in Pangasinan State University in word recognition who were selected through complete enumeration. The level of ability in word recognition was measured by an instrument which was adapted. The word recognition covered in this study were function and content words. Findings showed that the freshman AB in English Language students are very good in recognizing content words but good in recognizing function words. The overall level of ability of the respondents in recognizing both word classes is very good. Therefore, students are encouraged to continuously study the different word classes to strengthen their ability in recognizing words according to their classes.*

Keywords – Word Recognition, PSU College Students, Content Words, Function Words

INTRODUCTION

In writing or speaking, whatever purpose it may serve, allows the use of language in which words are involved. Words that are critically chosen to assemble an idea and that undergo certain rules.

In gaining fluency of English language, it must be taken into consideration familiarity in grammar. With the use of grammar, which is the system of rules that involves words, one is able to express opinions and feelings may it be oral or written. Dizon (2009) indicates that grammar is the systematic way in which language functions to convey meaning. While the main objective of writing and speaking is the communication of ideas, the objective of grammar is to have a clear statement through precise expression of one's thought with the proper words to convey particular meanings.

Words have different roles in language and differ greatly in their semantic content (Diaz and McCarthy, 2008). In a sense, some words possess more meanings than functionality, while others possess more functionality than meanings. In constructing a grammatically correct sentence, one should know how to identify words that are given the emphasis and which one should not. In this case, one should be able to recognize the two classes, the lexical/content words and the grammatical/function words.

Content and function words are two classes that follow the same rules of English orthography and phonology, but differ markedly in their role in language and in the degree to which they represent meaning (Diaz and McCarthy, 2008). *Content words* convey meaning semantic information. They are often but not always, associated with a physical object and have meaning independent of context. Thus, they are often referred to as open-class words. In contrast, *function words* have linking and syntactic functions in context, but few associations to other words when presented outside of a sentence. The number of function words is generally fixed and so referred to as closed-class words.

Content words are words that have culturally shared meaning in labelling an object or action. According to Robles and Estioco (2009) content words express things, actions or qualities and give specific meanings to the sentences. Content words are absolutely necessary to convey an idea to someone else (Pennebaker, 2011). These include nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs.

Meanwhile, function words are used to stitch and connect the content words in the sentence. They are also known as grammatical words. These words include pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, determiners, auxiliaries, and interjections.

This research talks about content and function words to assess the level of ability of freshman students in recognizing words with the following formulated objectives: (1) To determine the profile of the respondents such as most preferred reading materials in English, mother tongue, and type of high school graduated from; (2) To determine the level of ability of the students in recognizing content words and function words; and (3) To ascertain the frequency counts and percentage distribution when grouped according to their profile variables.

METHODOLOGY

Descriptive method was used in this study. It is designed to gather information about present existing conditions. This method describes the nature of a situation as it exists at the time of the study and explores the causes of particular phenomena. The respondents of this study were the 43 students who were selected through complete enumeration. This study used a questionnaire as the main data gathering instrument. This instrument was adapted from the book of O'Brien. The data were tallied, categorized, analyzed and subjected to normative measures by the use of frequency counts and percentage distribution.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Profile of the Respondents

The respondents varied in their profile. Out of 43 respondents, majority of them or 30 (69.8%) preferred books. As for mother tongue, majority of the respondents or 16 (37.2%) spoke Filipino. With regard to school graduated from, most of the respondents or 39 (90.7%) graduated from public high schools while 4 or 9.3% graduated from private schools.

Level of Ability of the Respondents in Recognizing Content and Function Words

The respondents found to be **very good** in recognizing content words. On the other hand, as for the level of ability of the respondents in recognizing function words, majority of the respondents were found to be **good**.

Overall Level of Ability in Recognizing Content and Function Words in Sentences

Score Interval	Frequency	Percentage	Description
41-50	2	4.7	Excellent
31-40	**17**	**39.5**	**Very Good**
21-30	15	34.9	Good
11-20	6	14.0	Fair
0-10	3	7.0	Poor
TOTAL	**43**	**100**	

Table shows that majority of the respondents obtained the score range of 31-40 which means that they were categorized as **very good** in recognizing content and function words.

Frequency Counts and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents' Score When Grouped According to their Profile Variables

As can be gleaned from the table, when grouped according to their most preferred reading materials, 11 or 36.75 of the respondents who prefer books acquired very good. This finding implied that books especially textbook can be a good source of inputs about content and function words.

PROFILE VARIABLES		LEVEL OF ABILITY IN RECOGNIZING CONTENT AND FUNCTION WORDS									
		Excellent		Very Good		Good		Fair		Poor	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Most Preferred Reading Materials in English	Books	1	3.3	11	36.7	10	33.3	5	16.7	3	10
	Dictionary	0	0	2	50	2	50	0	0	0	0
	Encyclopedia	0	1	1	33.3	1	33.3	1	33.3	0	0
	Magazines	1	16.7	3	50	2	33.3	0	0	0	0
Mother Tongue	English	0	0	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Filipino	1	6.3	8	50	6	37.6	0	0	1	6.3
	Iloko	0	0	0	0	2	100	0	0	0	0
	Pangasinan	0	0	2	50	0	0	2	50	0	0
	Iloko and Filipino	1	8.3	4	33.3	3	25	3	25	1	8.3
	Pangasinan and Filipino	0	0	2	33.3	2	33.3	1	16.7	0	0
	Others	0	0	0	0	2	100	0	0	0	0
Type of High School Graduated From	Private	0	0	3	75	1	25	0	0	0	0
	Public	2	5.1	14	35.9	15	38.5	5	12.9	3	7.7

As for mother tongue, majority or 8 (50%) of the respondents who spoke Filipino as

their mother tongue gained very good. It implied that even non-native speakers can have a high recognition of words, this is valid since Filipino and English Language have a lot in common, example of this is the corresponding Filipino terms of the parts of speech.

With respect to the type of high school graduated from, majority or 15 (38.5%) students who graduated from public schools also obtained very good. This means that the respondents who graduated from public schools are more familiar and retentive in recognizing content and function words.

CONCLUSIONS

In the light of the findings of the study, the following conclusions were formulated:

1. Freshman AB in English Language students prefer books to other types of reading materials in English. Also, the respondents speak Filipino as their mother tongue. Moreover, they graduate from public high schools.

2. Freshman AB in English Language students are very good in recognizing content words and good in recognizing function words.

3. Freshman AB in English Language students obtain very good descriptive rating dominated in each profile variable.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions drawn, the following recommendations are hereby recommended:

1. Freshman students are encouraged to continuously study the different word classes to strengthen their ability in recognizing words according to their classes.

2. English teachers should introduce word classes especially the different categories that comprise function words while teaching the different parts of speech.

3. English instructors should give an emphasis on the differences between the different parts of speech under content words especially nouns and adverbs and the differences between categories under function words especially prepositions and auxiliary.

4. The institutions should provide more references or books which may help the students nurture their knowledge in terms of word recognition.

5. Future researchers are encouraged to undertake similar study which is broader in scope, using different academic levels of respondents.

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