

Context and meaning, teaching vocabulary



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Context and Meaning, Teaching Vocabulary Techniques to Teach Vocabulary

Smooth This word can be introduced using comparison and demonstration.

For example, a teacher can show students two surfaces – a smooth and a rough one – and comment “ This is a smooth ...” and “ This is a rough ...”.

Used can be, for example, two stones or two pieces of cloth.

Harmful

An option for introducing this word can be a live demonstration – the teacher can act out the meaning using body language and mimic. Another option is using a short text which talks about something harmful, and is accompanied with a picture demonstrating the harmful result of what the text talks about.

To dance

A live demonstration or a picture of dancing can be used for explaining the word.

To go out on a date

A text about, for example, dating customs, or one person’s preparing to go out on a date can be used to teach this phrase.

Silverware

The students can be shown separate pieces of silverware, which they know (a fork, a spoon, a knife), and then told that all they are called silverware.

That is the teacher goes from particular to general concepts when introducing the word.

Watermelon

The simplest way to teach this word is to accompany it with a picture.

Some Advantages and Disadvantages of Using Authentic Materials to Provide Context for Teaching Meaning

Using authentic materials can be of a great advantage to teach students

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word meaning, because they are the real examples of how the word is usually used. However, such materials can be inappropriate for beginners because they may not be ready to understand and comprehend the presented information. In addition, teaching meaning, I believe, should not be separated from teaching other concepts of the language, so it might be more useful to use materials specifically developed to meet the learning needs of the students. For example, if the students have just learnt Present Perfect Tense, it is good to use Perfect structures in the materials for teaching meaning in order for the students to both revise and strengthen the knowledge of Present Perfect, and learn the new vocabulary on the basis of already acquired knowledge. In addition, when authentic materials contain many unfamiliar or new grammatical structures, they are more difficult for the students to understand, and, as a result, the meaning of the separate words may be more difficult to explain too.

A Context for Teaching Vocabulary

The following text can be used to teach vocabulary to beginners. The words to introduce would be the names of the house premises: living room, kitchen, dining room, bathroom, bedroom. The text is accompanied by illustrations: a layout of the house, or pictures of separate rooms. The teacher reads the text showing each room on the picture.

Bill lives in a large house. There is a living room, a kitchen, a dining room, a bathroom, and two bedrooms in the house. One bedroom is for mother and father. The second bedroom is for Bill.

The living room is in the center of the house. It is large and light. The family watches TV, talks, and spends time together in the living room.

The dining room is smaller than the living room. There is a table and four

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chairs in the dining room. Bill and his parents have their meals in the dining room.

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