

# Teaching and learning vocabulary



## **Presenting Vocabulary**

### **Description of Presenting Vocabulary**

Vocabulary is one of the important aspects of language to teach. There are many quotations from famous linguistics to support this idea. For example, "Without grammar very little can be conveyed; without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed." (Wilkins 1972: 111) and "When students travel, they don't carry grammar books, they carry dictionaries." (Krashen in Lewis 1993: iii). Moreover, errors of vocabulary are potentially more misleading than those of grammar. Sometimes the context of the utterance would lead a listener to question their first interpretation, but a chance response such as "Yes, my father has an affair in that village'(confusing the Swedish affar meaning 'shop' with the English 'affair' which can mean 'extra-marital relationship') gives the listener the wrong impression. From above, you will see the importance of vocabulary. Hence teachers should know how to present vocabulary effectively in order to help student develop vocabulary.

In addition, the presenting of vocabulary has been studied for along time, there are still many uncertainties regarding: which vocabulary items should be taught and learned; c) how vocabulary can be taught and learned most effectively.

1. Which vocabulary items should be taught and learned
2. What to teach while teaching vocabulary
3. What is involved in teaching vocabulary
4. Principle of presenting vocabulary
5. Principle of presenting vocabulary
6. Some suggestions for the teachers

**1. Which vocabulary item should be taught and learned.**

Before we present vocabulary, we should know that there are active vocabulary and passive vocabulary. Passive vocabularies are the words that student know while active vocabularies are the words that student use. In reality, native speakers have a passive vocabulary about 100, 000 words but they use about 5, 000-10, 000 words in their daily life. Therefore, the first decision to make when presenting a vocabulary is to decide which words are needed for teaching vocabulary. Teacher should remember that there are a number of words in English language but the average native speaker uses only about five thousand words in everyday speech. Therefore, teacher has to select vocabulary to present, based on useful and frequency to the need of learners. Moreover, teacher has to decide whether the word is worth spending time or not. If the vocabulary is a low frequency word and is not useful word, it should be taught as quickly as possible.

**2. What to teach while teaching vocabulary**

The effective way to present vocabulary involves what need to be taught about a word. There are many things to teach while teaching vocabulary. I divided into three groups that are form, meaning and usage

**2. 1 Form**

Form is divided into spoken form, written form and word part. First, spoken form concerns with pronunciation. It is the initial stages of language learning for teacher to insist on a fair amount of pronunciation practice of new words to help learners acquire the correct stress pattern of syllabus. Second, written form concerns with spelling. Teacher should clarify the pronunciation before showing the written form. Finally, word parts concern with part of

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speech of word. Students need to know part of speech of the vocabulary such as it is verb, noun or adjective in order to use it effectively. In addition, students have to study about the affixes (the prefixes and suffixes) because it may indicate about the meaning. For example, 'superman' super mean above or beyond and man mean human being. This is particularly useful for a higher level.

## 2. 2 Meaning

In teaching vocabulary, teachers need to look at two aspects of meaning in order to make students understand better in learning vocabulary of the English language. The first concerns the link between meaning and the world to which words refer. The second involves the sense relations that exist among words.

First, if a word has reference to an object, action or event in the physical world. This can be described as denotative meaning. In contrast, connotative meaning relates to the attitudes and emotions of a language user in selecting a vocabulary and the influence of these on the listener or reader's interpretation of the word.

Second, this aspect of meaning involves the sense relations that exist among word. These relations can be found into syntagmatic relation, which is about the relations between words in sentence, and paradigmatic relations, which is about complex relations with other words in the language in a network of meaning.

## 2. 3 Usage

Teacher has to teach the usage of vocabulary about the situation when the word is used or is not used. Teacher has to describe that it is formal, neutral or informal word. Moreover, it is used in speaking or in writing. Then, teacher has to describe the words which have the same collocations as an L1 word of similar meaning in order to prevent mistakes in usage. For example, you describe thing 'in great detail' not 'in a big deal.'

### **3. Ways of Presenting the Meaning of New Items**

There are many techniques to present vocabulary. Each vocabulary has different appropriate ways to present. The most common ways to present word are followings.

#### **3. 1 Illustration**

An illustration is visualization such as a drawing or picture. It is very useful way to present concrete words such as cat, house or tree. In addition it is an effective way for visual learners. However It has its limits because it cannot present abstract word.

#### **3. 2 Mime**

Mime is a physical demonstration. It is good to present action verbs. In addition, it can be fun and memorable.

#### **3. 3 Synonyms and antonyms**

Words not only have sequential relationship, but also exist in complex relationships with other words in the language in a network of meanings. The most common are synonyms and antonym.

### 3. 3. 1 Synonyms

A simple way of defining synonym is to say that, in a given context, one linguistic item can be exchanged for another without changing the meaning of the sentence or utterance.

### 3. 3. 2 Antonym.

The term antonym covers a number of relationships often thought of as opposite. Teacher has to use the word that students are already known in order to be effective to get meaning across.

### 3. 4 Definition

teacher can get the definition of word from dictionary to present. For example, the definition of ' town house' is a house that is one of a row of identical houses situated side by side and sharing common walls.

### 3. 5 Translation

Using L1 translation is fast and efficient. However teacher should remember that not every word has a direct translation.

### 3. 6 Context

This is the way to present vocabulary by giving many example sentences with the word in context.

Teacher has to remember that using a combination of techniques can be both helpful and memorable.

## **4. The implications for the teaching of vocabulary**

### 4. 1 Developing a various techniques for the teaching meaning

Learner will confront new words in various ways in the classroom, through textbooks, through material or through teacher's language. Therefore, teacher needs to explain new words for them. Take the word frightened, for example. There are a number of techniques which could be used

1. A physical demonstration such as mime, gesture. This is the effective way to create a visual memory for the word. Moreover, it can be fun and memorable.
2. An explanation, using a number of contexts, for example, the feeling when you watch horror movie, will lead the learner towards meaning.
3. A synonym, for example, " very scared", can be an effective way for getting meaning across.
4. Using L1 translation
5. Asking student to check in a dictionary.
6. drawing a simple picture

Some of these techniques want more processing from student and will aid memory. The teacher will need to make decisions about which words are useful to remember and choose techniques accordingly.

#### **4. 2 Encouraging the development of effective strategies**

Research tends to suggest that if inferencing is easy because the text has a lot of contextual clue or there is a cognate word, memory is less likely. The more active the learner need to be, the more likely the word will be remembered. Awareness of this distinction will guide the teacher into exploiting both for reading strategy development and for vocabulary acquisition.

## **5. Principles of presenting vocabulary**

1. Teacher has to make the teaching easy and clear by giving simple explanation.
2. Teacher has to use varieties of presentation at the same time such as, oral presentation and written presentation. For example, Teacher writes down vocabularies on board as well as explaining.
3. Teacher has to bring in the words that are already partly known to relate to synonyms or antonym.

## **6. Some suggestions for the teachers**

Each teacher has ways to teach new words. Whatever teaching style are used the suggestions which may help teachers are followings:

1. Teacher has to prepare the way to show meaning. For example, if the words which the teacher is going to present are concrete, the teacher should prepare picture of those words to present.
2. Teacher has to ask students to tell the meaning first in order to elicit meaning from students before they offer the meaning.
3. Teacher has to think about how to show the meaning of a word with related words such as synonyms, antonyms etc. Moreover, the example words should be the word that students are already known.
4. Teacher has to think about how to check students' understanding.
5. Teacher has to think about the context in real situation where the words might be used in order to relate learning language to real life and also promotes high motivation.
6. Teacher should review the vocabulary via a game or activity in order to motivate them in learning.

7. Teacher should give them some assignment by telling them to read, watch films, listen to songs etc and note the useful word. It is a good way to study vocabulary by themselves.
8. Teacher should have a section of board for vocabulary items that come up while teacher are teaching. Use different colours for the word / the phonetics /the part of speech.
9. It is a good idea to teach vocabulary with associated meanings together.
10. Teacher should encourage students to use a good dictionary.
11. Whenever the student asks the word that has never heard of the word, you tell the student that you will check and get back to them later.
12. Teacher should enough examples sentences to make sure that the students understand what the teacher taught and give extra example if the students are unsure and encourage them to write the word in an example sentence.

**Classroom application.**

As being an English teacher, I found that teaching vocabulary is quite difficult because there are a lot of words to teach and my student cannot remember the words I taught but after I have done this assignment. I got a lot of idea to apply in my classroom in order to present vocabulary effectively.

First, I encourage my student to use any other strategies for vocabulary learning. Then I create a lot of activities which help them to develop new strategies as well as strengthen existing ones. For example, my students can

be observed writing down new words as they occur during lesson but it is less common to find such thorough strategies for notebook keeping. Then I give student ideas for how they might design their notebook such as making word-network.

Then, I know how to select word for presenting vocabulary. I chose vocabulary based on frequency in the first place with considerable weight being given to functional, notional or situation relevance of the item.

Finally, I develop a variety of techniques for the teaching of meaning in my classroom such as drawing a picture which is the most effective as it will create a visual memory for the word, giving several example sentences with the word in context to show the meaning and giving demonstration. As a result these techniques help my student to pay attention in class and they can remember the vocabulary.

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