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The Professor Series

In

Teaching Vocabulary

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جامع البحث فـي سطور

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إهداء

*إلي من افتقدتها وأنا في أمس الحاجة إليها .....

*فهي إن كانت غائبة عن عالمنا هذا فهي حاضرة بقلبي ووجداني ... أمي الغالية.

*إلي من شملني بعطفه ورعايته ..

*إلي من أدبني فأحسن تأديبي...والدي العزيز.

* أهدي باكورة أعمالي اليهما تقديرا لصنيعهما معي وعرفانا بجميلهماعلي .

Teaching Vocabulary

It is of utmost importance to help students achieve their outcome in vocabulary development. Reasons for emphasizing a rich listening, speaking, reading, and writing vocabulary on the part of students need clarifying. Why should students achieve their optimum in vocabulary development?

1. Ideas and content are expressed more accurately and with greater clarity.

2. Success in many jobs, and professions in dependent upon proficiency in vocabulary development.

3. Prestige generally is attached to richly developed listening, speaking, reading, and writing vocabularies.

4. Greater enjoyment in reading as a leisure time activity is possible.

5. Problem solving demands optimum achievement in vocabulary development.

6. When conversing and discussing, it is necessary to have proficient command of the English language including the proper meaning and use of words.

7. It is necessary to use words which convey meanings accurately in speaking and writing.

8. Variety in selecting terminology is important in speaking and in writing.

Whereas vocabulary teaching has different values in the various approaches, different techniques have been used in teaching vocabulary. In a report of a study initiated by The Executive Committee of the National Council of Teachers of English and directed at determining the state of knowledge about the teaching of vocabulary methods of teaching vocabulary were classified under the two general headings of direct and context methods (Perera , 1981).

The oldest procedure of the direct methods is "word list". Its application is very simple. The teacher assigns at one time a number of words to be learned by the students, then; the teacher tests the students at later time. This technique is based on the

assumption that the students study the words, generally by looking in a dictionary for their groups, who received training in using a word-study technique, scored significantly higher on the post tests than subjects in the no-structure group who were not taught a word-study method and who were allowed to use their own methods of study.

Another aspect that plays an undeniable role in vocabulary learning is word classes. Words have been classified into various ways; the most common of which is the syntactic classification of words known as parts of speech. In the area of vocabulary, words are classified, too. Sinclair and Renouf (1988 p. 152) distinguish two kinds of words; namely, lexical words and functional words. Another classification is that of Robinson (1999 p. 275) who classifies words as general, specific and delexical. Widdowson (1983: p 92) calls the delexical words •procedural words" procedural words are those words that tend to change their meaning according to the context in which they appear e.g. "have" and "do".

It may be important to consider the level of students in vocabulary learning particularly when foreign language vocabulary is the focus of concern. Acquisition of foreign language vocabulary is similar to that of mother tongue and this seems to be an established fact echoed in many recent publications, research papers and articles (e.g. Hatch, 1983; Krashen, 1989 and Oxford, 1990). The nature of words also parallel this fact in the sense that picture nouns lend themselves to beginner learning, concrete words to elementary and intermediate learning whereas abstract words lend themselves to upper intermediate and advanced learning. This is based on what may be taken for an assumption that concrete nouns are definite even if they are in large numbers and the students learn only what they need of these nouns. Then, they learn about abstract concepts; hence, their need for abstract words.

Another technique is inferring word meanings**.** In this method, students will hear selections that each contains an unfamiliar or a non-sense word. After they have listened carefully to the way the word is used in each selection, they will hear four words or phrases. The teacher writes the number of the word or phrase that best tells the meaning of the word or what it is like. There is an example:

This is a selection about ponderous animals. Students listen to it carefully. Mammoths were ponderous animals. Dinosaurs were ponderous, too. Because they were ponderous, these animals left deep footprints in the mud when they walked near water holes. The teacher asks the students to write the number of the word or phrase that best tells what ponderous means.

1- plant-eating   2- prehistoric   3- very heavy   4- four-footed

Number 3 is the correct answer. Dinosaurs and mammoths were plant-eating. Prehistoric, four-footed animals. But none of these answers tells why they would leave deep footprints .The phrase very heavy is a definition of the word ponderous.

In this connexion, semantic mapping is a vital technique in teaching English vocabulary. Mapping vocabulary means making a web that supports understanding of the key features of a word or concept. The teacher creates a chart that has the targeted vocabulary word in the center, with four boxes around it. Each box has a different activity associated with the word, such as writing synonyms, writing antonyms, illustrate the word, write the definition, and use it in a sentence.

In addition, teaching parts of words is one of the best activities for teaching vocabulary. When a teacher teaches parts of words such as the root (or base), prefixes and suffixes, he/she is teaching an important skill. Students learn to use word parts to recognize unfamiliar or rare words and to construct meaning from them. For example, a word that has a suffix, a prefix, or both as in the word "careful". The teacher discusses

the suffix -ful, how it relates the root word, applies it to other root words, then adds another suffix on, such as -ly.

Furthermore, index card vocabulary game plays a vital role for teaching vocabulary. This activity makes teaching vocabulary fun for both the students and the teacher. The teacher labels index cards with the words requiring direct teaching - one card for each word. On the front of the card he/she writes the word. On the back, he/she puts very limited and specific information about the vocabulary word (only what the students really need to know). Then, he/she hands out these cards in class along with a paper that has all the words listed on it.

He/she tells the students they are each now a special math word, science word, or whatever (the one on their card) and they will need to visit their friends to find out who everyone is and important information about them. As students visit with each other, they write down the essential information each person tells them (from the back of their card) beside the correct name on their paper.

Among the techniques used for teaching vocabulary is asking the students to put the chosen word in an example. The teacher writes a vocabulary word on the board reads it with the students and discusses it then asks them for examples of what the word means. Then he/she shows pictures that represent examples of the word and pictures that show the opposite meaning of the word. For example, if the word was miniature, he/she can show pictures of tiny dogs, teacups, dolls, etc. For non-examples, he/she shows pictures of dinosaurs, elephants, or large boats.

Using a word wizard box facilitates the process of teaching vocabulary. In this method, the teacher asks students to bring new words into the classroom that they hear at home, on TV, or anywhere else and drop these words into a word wizard box. At the end of class, the teacher pulls out a word and asks who wrote it. Have students tell

him/her where they heard the words and how they were used. And then the teacher asks students to use these new words in their discussions and writing.

Using computers and television helps students learn English vocabulary. Computers are a non-threatening way to help children work on their own or with a buddy to learn vocabulary. Educational children's television can also be a wonderful way to increase many reading skills, including vocabulary and comprehension. Also, using audio books helps students build vocabulary by providing books with tapes in a listening center on one side of the classroom. By hearing and seeing the word in context at the same time, the students pick up its meaning and also gain prosody, and oral fluency.

In addition to this, using vocabulary in a pre-reading lesson is a fruitful way for activities can easily start off a pre-reading Vocabularyteaching English vocabulary. lesson. When it comes to using vocabulary activities, a pre-reading lesson should contain some if not all, of the new vocabulary. Some ideas include: starting with a brainstorm, comics, a quotation, a dialogue or a sentence as lead-in.

Contend that research clearly emphasizes that Christen and Murphy (1991) for learning to occur, new information must be integrated with what the learner already knows. They feel that teaching vocabulary as a prereading step is an instructional intervention that should be considered when readers lack the prior or background also argues that prereading activities Kueker (1990)knowledge to read in a content area. help enormously in reading comprehension.

Another technique to help students see a word in a broader context is to have them answer the following questions: (1) what is it? ; (2) what is it like?; (3) what are some believe that this list of three questions helps Schwartz and Raphael (1985)examples? students see relationships between familiar and less familiar terms and also brings the meaning of an unknown term into focus by requiring analogies and examples.

As for teaching vocabulary to advanced students,   they can generally communicate well, having learnt all the basic structures of the language. However, they need to broaden their vocabulary to express themselves more clearly and appropriately in a wide range of situations. Students might even have a receptive knowledge of a wider range of vocabulary, which means they can recognise the item and recognise its meaning. Nevertheless, their productive use of a wide range of vocabulary is normally limited, and this is one of the areas that need greater attention. At this stage the teachers are concerned not only with students understanding the meaning of words, but also being able to use them appropriately, taking into account factors such as oral / written use of the   language;   degree   of   formality,   style   and   others.

That is to say, there are several aspects of lexis that need to be taken into account when teaching vocabulary. The list below is based on the work of Gairns and Redman (1986):

· **Boundaries between conceptual meanings:** knowing not only what lexis refers to, but also where the boundaries are that separate it from words of related meaning (e.g. cup, mug, and bowl).

· **Polysemy**: distinguishing between the various meaning of a single word form with several but closely related meanings (head: of a person, of a pin, of an organisation).

· **Homonymy**: distinguishing between the various meaning of a single word form which has several meanings which are not closely related (e.g. a file: used to put papers in or a tool).

· **Homophony**: understanding words that have the same pronunciation but different spellings and meanings (e.g. flour, flower).

· **Synonymy**: distinguishing between the different shades of meaning that synonymous words have (e.g. extend, increase, expand).

· **Affective meaning**: distinguishing between the attitudinal and emotional factors (denotation and connotation), which depend on the speakers attitude or the situation. Socio-cultural associations of lexical items is another important factor.

· **Style, register, dialect**: Being able to distinguish between different levels of formality, the effect of different contexts and topics, as well as differences in geographical variation.

· **Translation**: awareness of certain differences and similarities between the native and the foreign language (e.g. false cognates).

· **Chunks of language**: multi-word verbs, idioms, strong and weak collocations, lexical phrases.

· **Grammar of vocabulary**: learning the rules that enable students to build up different forms of the word or even different words from that word (e.g. sleep, slept, sleeping; able, unable; disability).

· **Pronunciation**: ability to recognise and reproduce items in speech.

The implication of the aspects just mentioned in teaching is that the goals of vocabulary teaching must be more than simply covering a certain number of words on a word list. The teachers must use teaching techniques that can help realise this global concept of what it means to know a lexical item. And they must also go beyond that, giving students opportunities to use the items learnt and also helping them to use effective written storage systems.

In my opinion, the most important aspect of vocabulary teaching for advanced students is to foster their independence so that they will be able to deal with new lexis

and expand their vocabulary beyond the end of the course. Therefore guided discovery, contextual guesswork and using dictionaries should be the main ways to deal with discovering meaning. Guided discovery involves asking questions or offering examples that guide students to guess meanings correctly. In this way students get involved in a process of semantic processing that helps learning. Contextual guesswork means making use of the context in which the word appears to derive an idea of its meaning, or in some cases, guess from the word itself, as in words of Latin origin. Teachers can help students with specific techniques and practice in contextual guesswork, for example, the understanding of discourse markers and identifying the function of the word in the sentence (e.g. verb, adjective, noun). The latter is also very useful when using dictionaries.

Students should start using English dictionaries as early as possible, from intermediate upwards. With adequate training, dictionaries are an invaluable tool for learners, giving them independence from the teacher. As well as understanding meaning, students are able to check pronunciation, the grammar of the word (e.g. verb patterns, verb forms, plurality, comparatives, etc.), different spelling (American versus British), style and register, as well as examples that illustrate usage.

As well, working in groups help fostering learning independence, and especially in vocabulary work, students can exchange knowledge, asking others to explain unknown items. Group work will be a motivating factor, as students talk about places they have been on holiday to, trying to remember details together, exchanging impressions and even good memories.

To summarize, Van Alien suggests the following summary of skills and abilities for extending

students' vocabularies**:**

- Using resources in the classroom for specific word classes needed in writing

- Using a thesaurus to add variety in writing

- Using a dictionary to verify meanings

- Developing personal resources such as a writing handbook to aid in writing and spelling.

-Using inflectional changes according to **context.** Examples: dog, dogs; leap, leaps, leaped, leaping.

-Using pictures in context with language patterns that use a variety of form-class words.

-Using the same word in a variety of forms. Examples: beauty, beautify, beautiful; love. lovely, lovable, unlovely.

-Making use of descriptive words to clarify and elaborate meaning; words of color, size, shape, texture, sound, taste, smell, feelings, touch, and motion.

-Knowing and using more than one name for the same thing. Example: mother, woman, female, girl, wife, aunt

-Knowing and using more than one word for the same action. Examples; run, scamper, hurry, race, trot, flee .

In short, vocabulary acquisition theories are often colored with the prevailing theories of psychology, Blachowicz (l987: 132) introduces a symptom of the neglect in this area which is that little class time is devoted to vocabulary instruction. In spite of this and because of its importance, vocabulary instruction occurs every now and then inside the classrooms and most cases of occurrence are unofficial in the sense that they are not planned for and depend on what the teacher feels indispensable for the students. This is an affirmation of idea that vocabulary teaching takes place inside the classroom in a non-strategic way which, in a way or in another, leads to a non-strategic learning of such vocabulary.

Such non-sufficient class time for vocabulary teaching may be the reason of the lack of attention to the development of independence in gaining word meaning or towards

generalized strategies for figuring out words, committing them to memory and easier recall. Some researchers go far as to indicate a neglect in a certain part of speech. An example of this is what Kerim-Zatfe and Pavlov (1989: 384) stress of the neglect of the teaching of adverbs. They say that this particular sub-area needs more attention. The meaning of unknown adverbs, according to them, should be equally stressed as the known ones because this may, hopefully, lead to a clearer understanding on the part of the learners. This is due to the close relationship of the lexical meaning and the syntactic function.

Finally, to heighten vocabulary in the mind of the students, teachers should enrich spelling skill.

Some of the major skills needed to spell are the following:

1- The ability to relate phonemes sounds of the language with the graphemes letters used to represent them in writing.

2- The ability to recall and represent consonant vowel patterns as used in English spelling.

3- The ability to use the dictionary to ascertain correct spelling and pronunciation of words.
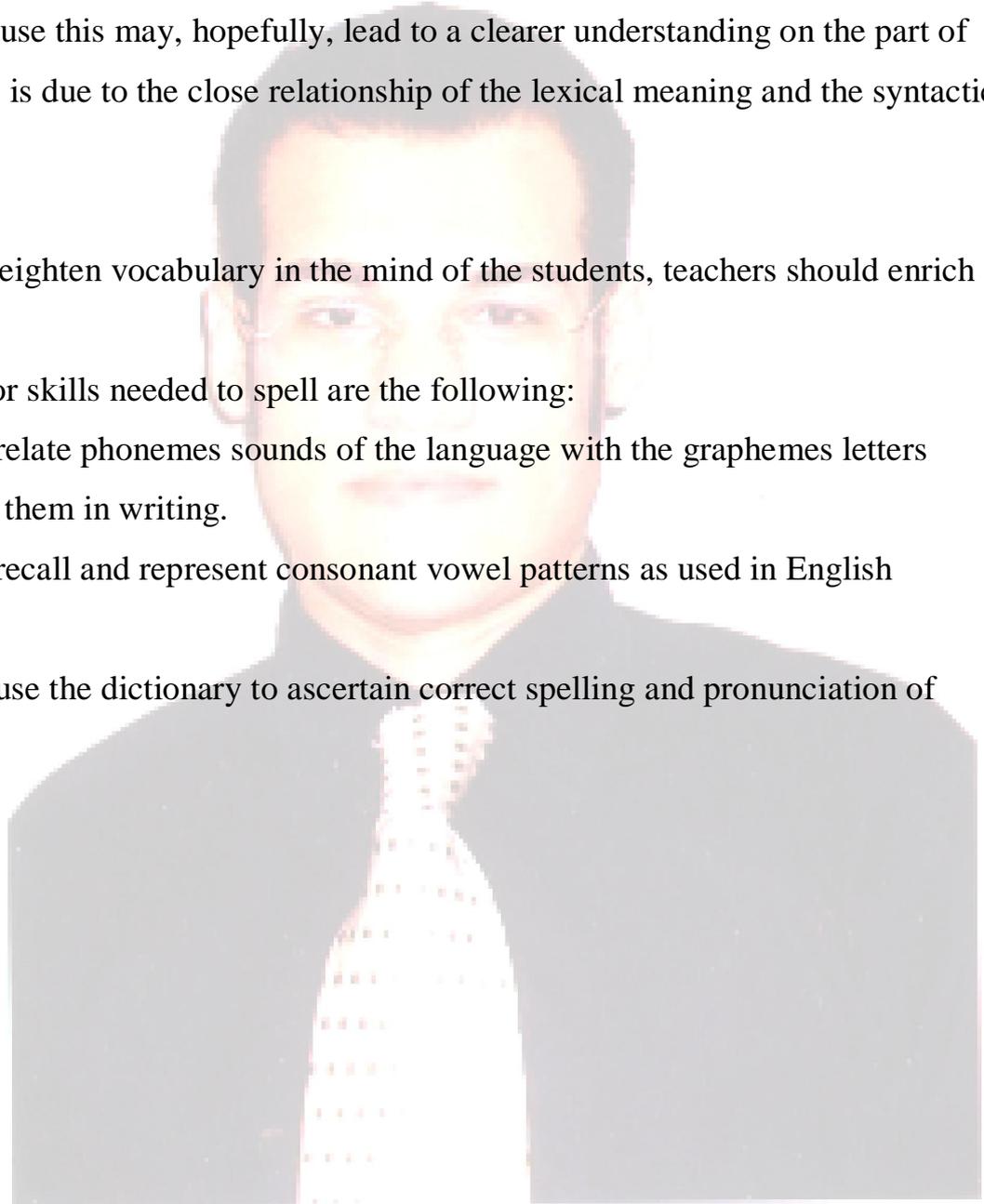
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