

EFFECTIVE TECHNIQUES IN TEACHING VOCABULARY IN ESL (ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE) CLASSES

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Abstract : In the given article the ways of improving the teaching vocabulary in ESL classes are discussed, as enlarging the vocabulary skills is very important in learning foreign language.

Key words: ESP learners, dictionary, enlarge vocabulary, matching, guessing words, writing definition, gap fill, split vocabulary, ESL, finding synonyms, antonyms, odd words, acknowledge

Introduction 1.1

It is not a secret that most ESP learners, too, acknowledge the importance of vocabulary acquisition. Here are some statements made by learners, in answer to the question “How would you like to improve your vocabulary in learning English? “ (Scot Thornberry ,” How to teach vocabulary”, UK, 2002).

- Oral is my weakness and I can't speak a fluent sentence in English. Sometimes, I am lack of useful vocabularies to express my opinions.
- My problem is that I forget the words soon after I have looked in the dictionary. For example when I read a English book.
- I would like to improve my vocabulary. I have the feeling that I always use the same idiomatic expressions to express different sort of things.
- I would like to enlarge my vocabulary (this word I also had to find in dictionary).Too often my speaking is hard caused by missing words.

However, vocabulary teaching has not always been very responsive to such problems, and teachers have not fully recognized the tremendous communicative advantage in developing an extensive vocabulary.

Material and methods 1.1.1

For a long teaching approaches such as the Direct Method and audio lingualism gave greater priority to teaching of grammatical structures. In order not to distract from the

learning of these structures, the number of words introduced in such courses was kept fairly low. Those words which were taught were often chosen either because they were easily demonstrated or because they fitted neatly into the "Structure of the day".

Certainly, it can't be ignored that vocabulary plays a great role in communication. However, there are some difficulties faced by teaching students to learn vocabulary in English. Some teachers say that they still have difficulties to teach vocabulary in ESL students since something students are not able to express what is on their minds because their lack of actual language. To help the teachers in teaching vocabulary in ESL classes, teachers may use interesting teaching techniques to present their teaching materials that also help them in creating fun class.

Theory 1.1.2

What is more important, several methodologists have applied their contributions to the list of investigations on teaching and learning vocabulary in English as a second language courses. For example, foreign linguists Laufer, Hwang, Liu Na, Chall, Crow, Quigley, Harvey Stieglitz had created theoretical preconditions for describing the importance of teaching and learning vocabulary, defining vocabulary learning goals, organizing vocabulary learning in teaching ESL.

Besides that, research by Hwang and Nation (forthcoming) on newspaper stories found that, if learners read a series of related stories, the vocabulary load was reduced compared with if they read a similar number of unrelated newspaper stories. If proper nouns were added to the first 2000 words, learners would have a 95 percent coverage of the vocabulary from the second story on in a set of follow – up stories. This 95 percent coverage figure agrees with that found by Liu Na and Nation (1985) for the text coverage needed to guess unknown words from context.

Results 1.1.3

Additionally, recent work on the estimation of total vocabulary size confirms that the vocabulary of English-speaking university students is likely to be around 15,000 word families. Chall (1987) argues that when native-speaking children are learning to read, the greatest vocabulary growth from about 5 years old until 11 years old is in learning to recognize the written forms of words that are already a part of their oral vocabulary. At around 11 years old there is a shift to learning the forms and meanings of unknown words especially those met in books.

Thus the primary grades may be characterized as overcoming a gap in word recognition, whereas the intermediate grades and beyond may be characterized as overcoming a gap in word meanings (Chall, 1987,p.9).Chall says that research evidence indicates that, for both word recognition and learning word meanings, direct teaching apart from context is a useful addition to contextual learning.

Discussion 1.1.4

According to the suggestion of a leading authority Wilma Rivers “Vocabulary cannot be taught. It can be presented ,explained ,included in all kinds of activities ,and experienced in all manner of associations....but ultimately it is learned by the individual .As language teachers ,we must arouse interest in words and a certain excitement in personal development in this area...We can help our students by giving them ideas on how to learn , but it each will finally learn a very personal selection of items, organized into relationship in an individual way.

Undeniably, identifying the best techniques in teaching and learning vocabulary by considering the levels abilities and interests of learners is very important as the proper chosen technique can be the reason of enlarging the vocabulary of students .That’s why vocabulary is one of the important branches , as communication between people is possible only due to vocabulary .

The discussion of effective techniques on teaching and learning vocabulary have been mentioned in works of a great scholars .According to the descriptions of the linguist Paul Nation “New Ways in Teaching Vocabulary “(1994,USA) , there are several strong reasons for which the vocabulary component of a language course needs to be carefully planned. Several of the points raised here are dealt with in more detail in the introductions to the various sections of the vocabulary.

Firstly, because different vocabulary gives greatly different returns for learning it is important to make sure that the learners have good control of the high frequency words of the language before moving on to the less frequent vocabulary. In addition, the focus of teaching for high frequency vocabulary is different from the focus of teaching for low frequency vocabulary. A good vocabulary learning program should therefore focus on the appropriate level of vocabulary for the learners and should do this in the appropriate way.

Secondly, most language teaching courses make vocabulary learning more difficult than it should be as a result of the way vocabulary in the course is sequenced.

Grouping opposites ,synonyms ,and items in a lexical set together causes interference that results in confusion for the learners. It is a simple matter to avoid this problem.

Thirdly, vocabulary learning opportunities and the quality of vocabulary learning can be greatly increased through the careful design of both vocabulary and other skill activities. Let us look at an example of this.

It is important to mention the following techniques which can be considered as effective ones in teaching new vocabulary for ESL Learners:

1. ESL Scrabble Game.

Procedure:

Students must use the seven tiles they have to add a word connected to the words already on the board.

They are given 1 min for doing that.

Effectiveness:

It is really an entertaining way to learn and use vocabulary. Students successfully define the words and use them in a sentence.

Contributor: Hugh Rutledge , the teacher of Boston University.

2. Fill in the gaps using vocabulary.

Procedure:

Students try to find the missed vocabulary from the list given below.

They listen to the audio of the text and choose the suitable answer.

Effectiveness:

While listening students guess the words related to the topic by paying attention to the form and tense of a word.

Contributor: Lindsay Miller , English Department at City Polytechnic og Hong Kong

3. Split Vocabulary.

Procedure:

Students should define the described words by the teacher.

They must be attentive to the given hints, short sentences.

Suitable words can also be replaced by pictures.

Effectiveness:

The guessing process of the hidden word will help learners to recall their names.

Contributor: Paul Nation, the teacher in Indonesia

4. Matching synonyms.

Procedure:

Students try to find the synonyms to the given vocabulary (noun, verb, adjective, adverb).

They should match the given words on the right to the left.

Effectiveness:

Learners easily recognize synonyms and this activity requires little pre-teaching.

Contributor: Hugh Rutledge, trainer of Boston University

5. Finding the odd word.

Procedure:

Students try to identify the word that doesn't suit to other words in the lines.

They work on words by differentiating them and circle the one in each line.

Effectiveness:

Learners practice explaining orally relationships between words.

Contributor: Keith S.Folse ,principal at Language Academy ,Japan.

Conclusion 1.1.5

Summarizing it can be suggested that there are many other different ways to teach vocabulary to ESL students. The most popular techniques involve letting students look for definitions in a dictionary, working with multiple choices, finding antonyms, working on word formations and making collocations, using graphic organizers as Venn Diagram, Cluster ,Fish Skeleton, as giving a detailed description of the appearance and qualities of the word or using synonyms to make students understand the new word. There are also other methods requiring more awareness on the part of the student and more detailed presentation on the part of the ESL teacher, such as:

- using examples
- using illustrations in the form of pictures or objects
- demonstrating the word through [acting or miming](#)
- putting the word in a meaningful context in a story or appropriate sentence
- using opposites
- translating the word into the students' native language
- using associated ideas

“A certain degree of stress involved in productive practice of vocabulary” refers to the idea that vocabulary practice should be challenging , but not too much stressful and frustrating for the learners (Gains & Redman, 1986). But it has been always difficult to determine the most important words and phrases needed to build a proper vocabulary

for conducting effective conversations in a particular profession or an occupational field (McCartney, 2007). The ability of choosing effective techniques for ESL learners mostly depends on the teachers organizing the plan and steps of reaching goals in teaching and learning vocabulary.

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