

Vocabulary: A Basic Element of Language Learning

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In order for learners to tackle the vocabulary in reading passage and to be able to write efficiently their writing, some strategies and tactics are needed to know and apply. And knowing vocabulary is apparently based on the way to memorise the new words and phrases.

Vocabulary in Language Teaching and Learning

Vocabulary is more vital than grammar in communication. However, learners feel frustrated when there have been some difficulties to communicate because of lack of words they want to express their ideas. Although learning words involves complex knowledge, how to use them can be interesting and satisfying. In reading, if new vocabulary may occur unexpectedly, it is necessary to prepare to deal with it or to refer to dictionary. It is not a simple matter to learn words and how to use them. Vocabulary is almost infinite whereas grammar seems to be finite. Words are also more sophisticated because they perform differently in different languages. It is also difficult for foreign language learners to keep more words active and available for use. Learning can be consolidated while using words frequently and even daily in real life communication. It is needed for teachers to consider how to reactivate previously introduced vocabulary as well as what new vocabulary to introduce. New words and expressions should be specified for each unit. Otherwise learners will have to do list suitable vocabulary. As a result, learners will be interested the selected vocabulary and it leads to interest of the topic of the lesson.

The way to deal with new vocabulary

The aspects of new vocabulary elements that learners may need to learn and to know about is as similar as to those of

ABSTRACT

The importance of developing the vocabulary learning skill is the most essential skill for foreign language learners. Language is sequential – speech is a sequence of sounds whereas writing is a sequence of symbols. To produce a good piece of writing, learners need to enrich their vocabularies. Vocabulary knowledge is also one component of language skills such as reading and speaking. Since the meanings of new words are emphasized frequently, vocabulary learning plays a crucial role in foreign language learning. Teaching and learning vocabulary in context also helps learners for inferring the meaning of new words. Vocabulary development is concerned with all four language skills and it can be treated as a link between reading and writing.

KEYWORDS: *vocabulary*

INTRODUCTION

Knowing rich vocabularies is vital for language learners because there will be some difficulties in communication due to limited vocabulary in target language. Vocabulary plays a vital role for learners in learning a language. The forefront consideration of teaching or learning and language assessment, of both first language (L1) and second/foreign language (L2), based on vocabulary comprehension and use.

Literature Review

Regarding teaching and learning vocabulary, vocabulary development, which is necessary in all four language skills, are needed.

other language elements, grammar patterns or functional expressions. Meaning, use in communication, pronunciation and spelling, and grammar are of these aspects. The meaning of new words and phrases can be described with L1 translation, or an equivalent word or expression. When learners have been given L1 translation, they get encouragement that they have learnt a word or expression constantly. Apparently, learners must be able to produce and recognize the form of a new word and its meaning and use. Especially, pronunciation and writing phonemic script must be learnt. The best way is that new words are conferred orally first and in written form later. Through listening, learners can learn the pronunciation of word and imitate and repeat it. Apart from the meaning, use in communication, pronunciation, and spelling of new vocabulary, a concept of how they perform in sentences. An appropriate context of presentation makes this kind of grammatical information clear without any need for grammatical terminology, but there may be arising some problems.

Vocabulary development

Vocabulary development is not a specific skill, however, it relates to language learning. Learners normally want to increase their store of vocabulary because they want their language improvement. The development of vocabulary is concerned with all four language skills. *This paper emphasizes on some useful strategies of teaching/learning vocabulary. Vocabulary learning and teaching is linked to reading and listening, with its receptive understanding of language, and writing and speaking, with its productive use. This has been expressed by Nattinger (1998):

“Comprehension of vocabulary relies on strategies that permit one to understand words and store them, to commit them to memory, that is, while production concerns strategies that activate one’s storage by retrieving these words from memory, and by using them in appropriate situations. The priority this distinction assigns to comprehension is one of many reasons why a growing number of researchers believe that comprehension should precede production in language teaching.”

Vocabulary and context

One of the core themes is that language reflects the contexts in which it is used and the purposes to which it is put. Language has particular implications for practice when it is also best encountered and learned in context. It is learning of lists of decontextualized vocabulary items. Rather than the focus in class will be on encouraging learners to develop strategies for inferring the meaning of new words from in which they occur, and teaching them to use a range of cues, both verbal and non-verbal to determine meaning.

Five suggestions for teaching written vocabulary in context are made by Kruse.

1. Prefixes, suffixes and roots (word elements): The only most crucial vocabulary skill L2 learners can have is the ability to recognize component parts of words, word families. The number of absolutely new words he will encounter is reduced and his control of the English lexicon is increased.
2. Pictures, diagrams and charts: Obviously, for L2 learners these clues must often be pointed out. There may be difficult for learners to connect the illustration with the item given.
3. Clues of definition: It is necessary for learners to notice the many types of highly useful definition clues. Most encountered clues are:
 - i. Parentheses or footnotes, which are the most obvious definition clues. The student can be taught to recognize the physical characteristics of the clue.
 - ii. Synonyms and antonyms usually occur with other clues: “*that is*” clause, “*is*” clauses, explanations in parentheses, and so on.
- A. Recognisable single words giving definition clues is “*is*” and “*that is*”.
- B. Appositival clause constructions set off by “*comma*”, “*which*”, “*or*”, or “*dashes*” are also physically recognizable clues.

For example,

- I was born in Yangon, the most crowded city in Myanmar.
- I love Mandalay, which is the ancient city of Myanmar Kings.
- Isaac Newton discovered the force of gravity, or the law of gravity.
- I like diamond – the most precious stone.

4. Inference clues from discourse, which are usually not confined to one sentence:

- A. Example clues: where the meaning for the word can be inferred from an example, usually use physical clues such as i.e., e.g., and for example.
- B. Summary clues: from the sum of the information in a sentence or paragraph, the student can understand the word.
- C. Experience clues: the reader can get a meaning from a word by recalling a similar situation he has experienced and making the appropriate inference.

5. General aids, which usually do not help the student with specific meaning, narrow the possibilities. The function of the word in question, i.e. noun, adjective, etc. is included and the subject is being discussed (Kruse1979).

Conclusion

This paper aims to help learners to increase the knowledge of vocabulary and to understand the meaning and the way to use them in target situations. If learners understand the vocabulary in context from reading, receptive skill, they can apply the uses of vocabulary in their writing, productive skill.

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