

THE OVERVIEW OF THE TECHNIQUES FOR TEACHING VOCABULARY

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ABSTRACT

Having good vocabulary will help the students to understand English passages. A more general way to help students develop vocabulary is by fostering a word consciousness, an awareness of and interest in words. Therefore, instruction in vocabulary involves far more than looking up word in a dictionary and using the words in a sentence. The English teacher should apply some techniques in teaching vocabulary efficiently, successfully, interestingly and enjoyably to increase the students' vocabulary may include and make them more interested in the reading passage. The techniques may include choosing the words in the reading passage and discussing them with the aspects of pronunciation, word form, dictionary work, reading, and using the words in context in five meetings. Other technique is assigning each student a word to look up and present in the class based on 'word profile' in one meeting. And the last is practicing vocabulary through games with the whole class, in pairs or teams and in groups. These techniques can be applied to suit the proficiency level of the students and different teaching environments

KEY WORDS

Techniques, passage, vocabulary

1. INTRODUCTION

The major problem faced by students in non English speaking countries to be successful in reading English passages is limited vocabulary. To be proficient readers, they need to enrich their vocabulary to build up their rhetorical skills. Vocabulary is the knowledge of words and word meanings. The knowledge of a word not only implies a definition, but also implies how that word fits into the world. Diamond and Gutlohn (2006:1) say that vocabulary knowledge is not something that can ever be fully mastered; it is something that expands and deepens over the course of a lifetime. Instruction in vocabulary involves far more than looking up words in a dictionary and using the words in a sentence. Diamond and Gutlohn (2006:1) state that vocabulary is acquired incidentally through indirect exposure to words and intentionally through explicit instruction in specific words and word learning strategies. This article reviews some techniques in teaching vocabulary efficiently, successfully, interestingly, enjoyably to increase the students' vocabulary and make them more interested in the reading passage. The following techniques in teaching vocabulary are outlined by Shamsi (2004), Cohen (2003), and Shaposhnik (2003).

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Shamsi (2004) describes technique in teaching vocabulary to make students more in the reading passages and help them increase their vocabulary. The teacher prepares a long list of basic and functional vocabulary that covers eight passages that the students have to learn during the semester. The eight passages are divided over eight weeks. The students learn five words in daily meeting for a week. The teacher asks the students to look at a list of words taken from the passages and select five words from each passage that they recognize, like or want to learn. The following are the examples of passages taken from the textbook *Enter the Lane* by Carol Nunnich. Eight chapters are chosen with one topic for each week. Following are the chapter titles, the words the students chose to study, and the reasons they gave in support of their choice.

Passage 1: Men Who Know Where Their Bullets Are Going

1. *invade*: related to their situation because their cities have been invaded by the occupation army.
2. *destruction/damage*: an action that they experience when soldiers destroy houses and trees.
3. *advocate*: the word is close in pronunciation to the Arabic equivalent *avvocato*.
4. *territory*: a word that students often hear on TV in "the occupied territories", which means their country.
5. *deer*: the student confused this word with the word *dear*.

Passage 2: Why I Hunt

1. *predator*: the student thinks that *pre* means before and wants to know the meaning of *hunter*.
2. *prey*: the student thinks that this word is related to mosques and praying.
3. *pursue*: the student thinks it is difficult to pronounce and wants to learn it.
4. *room*: the student confused its pronunciation with the word *room*.
5. *wrestle with*: related to free wrestling, a sport that the student likes to watch on TV.

Passage 3: Case Study: The Mairi vs. Rogerson Case

1. *arrest*: the student himself was once arrested by the soldiers.

1. jail: the student mentioned the word prison, so this word was introduced.
2. debut: the word sounded interesting to be learnt.
3. man: the student knows the first part of the word, man, and wants to know the other part.
3. accidental killing: the word accident is familiar.

Passage 4: To Know More About Less or Less About More

1. specialist: the word special is familiar.
2. explosion: the student knows the meaning in Arabic. The word is related to his daily life.
3. lack-of-off-trader: an expression that is written in bold type in the passage and sounds important.
4. email: related to computers.
5. available: -able indicates the word is an adjective, but the word is not familiar.

Passage 5: Case Study: Harvard University's Core Curriculum

1. Harvard: the student heard it in class.
2. curriculum: the teacher wrote it on the board and repeated it more than once.
3. courses: related to the subjects the student registers for at the university.
4. simply: the meaning of simple is clear, but the -ly ending is confusing.
5. education: the student is in Education.

Passage 6: Economic Right vs. Ecologic Right

1. habit: may be related to happy.
2. die: the student pronounces it as the verb live.
3. die: related to death.
4. scientist: related to science, which the student doesn't like.
5. choose: the student chose the word haphazardly.

Passage 7: Just Say No to Drugs

1. drugs: a famous topic.
2. black market: the literal translation in Arabic means the same.
3. addict: the student knew that the topic was drugs, so he gave the Arabic word and asked for its equivalent in English.
4. Arabic: the same word is used in Arabic. The word sounded more like Arabic than English to the student.
5. however: the student has seen the word often but doesn't know what it means.

Passage 8: Have All the Heroes Died?

1. hero: it appears at the very beginning of the passage and is unfamiliar.
2. baseball: the word sounds familiar.
3. political: related to politics; a topic that affects the student's life.
4. criticism: difficult to pronounce, although it has been seen often.
5. role-model: the student knows what model means and wants to know what role means.

This technique of teaching vocabulary is applied within five meetings per week. Each of five meetings highlighted a different aspect of the vocabulary: pronunciation, word form, dictionary work, reading, and using the words in context. The format for each of the meeting is described below.

First Meeting: Pronunciation

- Pronounce correctly the first words that they have chosen.
- React to these words by trying to connect them to other words, or events, persons, etc.
- Give examples of words with similar pronunciation.

Second Meeting: Word Form

- Recognize the forms of the words (verb, noun, adjective, adverb).
- Identify word endings for verbs, nouns, adjectives, adverbs.
- Provide other words of each form.

Third Meeting: Dictionary Work

- Review the alphabet and find the words in the dictionary.
- Learn basic dictionary symbols such as v. For verbs, n. For nouns, etc.
- Learn the meanings of the words.

Fourth Meeting: Reading

- Go to the passage and locate the words one by one.
- Read aloud the sentences in which the words appear.
- Explain the sentences.
- Translate the sentences.
- Find connections with titles, pictures, etc.
- Analyze ideas in the passage.

Fifth Meeting: Using Words in Context

- Changing singular nouns to plural.
- Changing tenses from past to present or present to past.
- Changing passive to active or vice versa.
- Changing positive to negative.
- Providing a synonym or antonym to the words if possible.
- Using noun reference or new words.
- Coming up with their own sentences, if possible.

Procedure in Teaching Vocabulary

Cohen (2002: 45) designed the following procedure to help students learn vocabulary efficiently and successfully.

Step one: Assessing the needs of a specific class

The first step is to compile a vocabulary list with the same number of words as students in a given class. The words should be taken from both literary sources and methodology readings that the students will have to reading the upcoming academic year. Whenever possible, the words should be given in the context in which they appear (either in a phrase or a sentence). The criteria for accepting a word are: 1) its usefulness in nonprofessional as well as professional contexts; 2) its frequency of usage in literature and spoken language

Step two: Checking the list with native speaker students (optional)

Where possible (and if desired), the list may be checked with students who are native speakers of English, in order to identify and define the words on the list that they know. Their reactions should indicate the suitability of the vocabulary for students who are non-native speakers.

Step three: Preparing a transparency

The list should be written on a transparency for projection onto a screen. The students are then asked to identify each word they know. Hopefully, they should recognize some of the words or be able to guess their meanings.

Step four: Assigning responsibility for each word

Next, each student is assigned a word to look up and present to the rest of the class. To guide their efforts, a "word profile" is suggested. Some of the items are mandatory (indicated by stars) while others are optional.

Word profile:

- ☐ Definition*
- ☐ Part of speech*
- ☐ Pronunciation*
- ☐ Synonyms and/or antonyms
- ☐ "Scale" (more than, equal to, less than)
- ☐ "Chunking" (i.e., putting the word in a short, meaningful phrase)
- ☐ Personal associations
- ☐ A defining sentence*
- ☐ Derivatives (i.e., different forms of the word)
- ☐ Connotation (This is often a problem for foreign learners to do by themselves. I view the role of the teacher as providing this kind of cultural information.)

Step five: Vocabulary reports

In each class session, one student is responsible for presenting a vocabulary item. The reports take about five minutes, and are usually given at the beginning of the lesson.

Students are encouraged to recall contexts in which they have encountered the word.

Step six: Review and self-checking

Every few weeks, the students review the vocabulary items that have been presented in class. Several procedures can be used for reviewing, depending on the aspect of vocabulary that the teacher wants to emphasize.

1. Provide a worksheet with sentences in which one vocabulary item is missing. The students go over their vocabulary lists and fill in the missing word. This is a simple word recognition activity.
2. Provide a worksheet with partial sentences which need to be completed. In each partial sentence, one of the vocabulary items is mentioned. The task of the students is to complete the sentence in any way that is meaningful. This reviews the vocabulary and provides more writing practice.
3. If there is a strong literature component in the students' program, it is advisable to ask students to write down the vocabulary items that they have found citing the literary context for some of these words. It takes about fifteen minutes for the reviewing and checking activity. No grading is involved. Sharing ideas and opinions is encouraged.

Vocabulary Practice Games

Games are recreational activities with purposes of enjoyment and reinforcement what has already been taught. Students are engaged in enjoyable and challenging activity with a clear goal. Often, they are so involved in playing the games that they do not realize they are practicing language. Games can provide practice in vocabulary. Shaposhvili (2002:

34) says that vocabulary practice games facilitate initial practice and periodic revision of vocabulary in an enjoyable context, thus making classroom vocabulary study an amusing and satisfying experience for teacher and student alike. Some games are played with the whole class, often with the students divided into two teams, in pairs or small groups. The followings are games that the teacher may exploit while working with words (Shaptochvili, 2002: 35-36).

1) *Memory game* begins with one student saying a sentence and the next student in turn adds another word or phrase to the sentence, repeating what has gone before in the same order, for example,

• Student 1: *I went shopping.*

• Student 2: *I went shopping and bought a jacket.*

• Student 3: *I went shopping and bought a jacket and a cap.*

and so on. Anyone who cannot add to the list or makes a mistake in ordering the words must drop out of the game. The last player remaining is the winner. This game may be exploited while working with words related to any topic.

2) *Word association* requires students to name all the words they know associated with any lexical category. One student says a word from the category, then the next student must immediately say another word from the category. The next student continues with another word and so on around the class. For the category *classroom*, for example, the game might begin this way:

• Student 1: *chalk*

• Student 2: *book bag*

• Student 3: *tape recorder*

• Student 4: *ruler*

Anyone who cannot think of a word immediately has to drop out of the game.

3) *Miming* can be used as a guessing game. This wordless activity leads the students to talk quite naturally. Someone mimes an action and the others try to guess what it is. This kind of guessing game can provide further practice of a wider variety of lexical and grammatical units, such as those related to occupations. One student chooses a job and mimes a typical activity that it involves. The others try to guess the job by asking either about the activity or the job, for example, *Do you work outside (in an office)? Do you wear a uniform (are a teacher)?* The student miming provides only nonverbal clues to help the rest of the class guess what the job is.

4) *Guess the tool* provides a good opportunity to develop students' skills in defining words and paraphrasing. For this game the teacher puts the students in pairs, facing each other, and gives a card with two words written on it to each student and asks them not to show each other their cards. The two words written on the cards are a tool and related occupation, for example, *saw* and *carpenter*, *chalkboard* and *teacher*. One at a time, each student describes the tool without saying its name. The other student has to guess the tool and name an occupation that uses the tool, for example,

□ Student 1: *It is used for painting walls and doors.*

□ Student 2: *It is a paintbrush. A decorator uses a paintbrush*

5) *Human sounds* can be used after students have learned the vocabulary of some of the sounds that humans make, for example, *choir*, *cough*, *cry*, *hum*, *scream*, *shout*, *sing*.

whisper, whistle, and mumble, and have grouped them according to the following categories: happiness, pain, sadness, disapproval, annoyance, fear, and excitement. The teacher gives the class situations in which people make noises and asks students to make the sound corresponding to each situation as well as say what it is, for example:

□ Teacher: *you are in a choir*

Student: sings and says *I am singing*

□ Teacher: *you don't want the others to hear what you are telling someone* Student: whispers something and says *I am whispering*

At the end of the game, the teacher may get students to suggest new sentences and contexts in which to use these verbs.

4) *Suggestion chain* involves reviewing both leisure activities vocabulary and ways to make suggestions. For this game students first make an individual list of leisure activities. Then using their lists, one student begins by suggesting something to do in the evening or next weekend, for example, *Let's go to the concert*. The next student has to disagree and, using another way of making a suggestion, suggest a different activity, for example:

□ Student 1: *Let's go to the concert!*

□ Student 2: *No, not the concert. What about going to the cinema?*

□ Student 3: *We could go to the football match*

□ Student 4: *No, not football. Why don't we visit Alice?*

Students continue the game until they have used all of their leisure activities. Another way to end this game and have a winner is to eliminate anyone who can't think of anything to do, repeats a leisure activity that was suggested before, does not use another way of making a suggestion, or uses the wrong verb form in the suggestion.

7) *Notices and warnings* practices the phrases and short sentences people come across in an English-speaking environment. For this game the teacher needs to prepare two sets of cards. The cards in the first set (notices) contain phrases and sentences of different kinds that give information or warnings. The cards in the second set (settings) contain the names of places where people would see or hear each notice. The teacher divides the class into two teams, distributing the notice cards among the students of one team and the setting cards among the students of the other team. One member of the notices team begins by reading aloud the notice on his or her card. The members of the other team quickly decide which settings from those on their cards is where the notice would be made.

For example:

□ Student from team 1: *sorry, tickets are sold out*

Student from team 2: *outside a cinema*

□ Student from team 1: *queue for currency exchange*

Student from team 2: *inside a bank*

8) *Exaggerate* gives students the opportunity to practice strong adjectives, such as *enormous, delicious, horrible, fascinating* and *terrified* along with intensifying adverbs, such as *extremely, quite, rather, really* and *absolutely* by answering questions. Beforehand the teacher must prepare cards, each with a question, which may be tag (*He is funny, isn't he?*), negative (*Wasn't she surprised when she heard the news?*), or yes/no (*Did you have a bad day?*). The game begins with the cards face down on the table. The teacher calls on someone to pick a card and read out the question. Then that person calls out the name of another student, who has to answer the question using appropriate strong adjective, for example,

□ Student 1: *They serve nice dishes in that restaurant, don't they? Bob?*

□ Student 2 (Bob): *Nice? The food is absolutely delicious there!*

Any student in this game who does not use a strong adjective and/or intensifying adverb while answering is eliminated. It is best to play this game after the students have matched common, weak adjectives with their stronger synonyms.

9) *Expand the sentence* should be played after students have learned about ordering a series of adjectives in English, because this game provides practice in placing adjectives in the correct order. The teacher starts by giving a short sentence. Students, in turn, have to expand the sentence with an adjective by putting it in the right place and then saying the sentence aloud. A player who cannot think of an appropriate adjective or puts it in an unacceptable position must drop out. For example:

□ Teacher: *She bought a jacket.*

□ Student 1: *She bought a black jacket.*

□ Student 2: *She bought a long-sleeved black jacket.*

□ Student 3: *She bought a long-sleeved black wool jacket.*

The game continues until the sentence would sound unusual in natural speech. The teacher can then start a new sentence with the students remaining in the game.

3. DISCUSSION

Learning vocabulary can be boring for students if the teacher uses the technique to teach vocabulary by having students look up words in the dictionary. The technique offered by Cohen (2003:45) can be applied by English teachers in teaching vocabulary. The students are asked to look up a word through a "word profile". "Word profile" is the definition, part of speech, pronunciation, synonyms, antonyms, and a sentence using the word. This process of teaching vocabulary will help the students remember the definition of the word. Furthermore, Morris (2001:2) says as cited from Grains and Rodman sees aspects of lexis need to be taken into account in teaching vocabulary. The following is the list of lexis elements given by Grains and Rodman.

- *Polymeny*: distinguishing between the various meanings of a single word form with several but closely related meanings (head of a person, of a pin, of an organization).
- *Homonymy*: distinguishing between the various meanings 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 speaker's 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.

Using a text in teaching vocabulary would be helpful and interesting. Limited vocabulary would affect the students in understanding the text. The technique given by Shamsi (2004: 26) is interesting because the students are asked to choose the words in a text. And then the students are asked to study the words in a different aspect of the vocabulary – pronunciation, word form, dictionary work, reading and using the words in context. Shamsi(2004: 29) says that this technique is very enjoyable in teaching vocabulary. While Sasson(2007:1) explains that vocabulary activities can easily start off a pre-reading lesson and it should contain some if not all, of the new vocabulary. Furthermore, she says that when a text has too many challenging or difficult words, the teacher may employ a variety of techniques such as translation, picture matching or explaining the new vocabulary in context.

In teaching vocabulary, Shapostokvili (2002:34) gives an enjoyable and challenging activity with a clear goal through games. This game activity not only provides practice in vocabulary, but also in spelling and grammar. Shapostokvili (2004:34) states that although games are recreational activities with the purpose of enjoyment, but in the language learning process their purpose is to reinforce what has already been taught. Sasson has different opinion with Shapostokvili. Sasson (2007: 2) says that vocabulary games are like warm-ups that have effect of calming the class and these activities motivate the students to learn English. Furthermore, Sasson (2007:2) explains that the aim of vocabulary games is to reduce fear and hesitancy that is sometimes characteristic of language learners studying a language that isn't their mother tongue.

4. CONCLUSION

Having limited vocabulary makes the students difficult to learn English especially in understanding an English text. It is the teacher's job to apply any technique in teaching vocabulary that will encourage and motivate the students to increase their vocabulary. The teachers should apply the technique that change the students' attitudes toward English from negative to positive ones. The teachers may need to adapt the techniques provided in this article to the proficiency level of their students. The teachers may also modify any technique to suit different teaching environments.

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ABSTRACT

The concept of English as an international language means English is treated as a global means of communication. This concept shows the English has various dialects influenced by the first language or it – which apply to the area of varieties of English spoken throughout the world. Therefore the focus of having a good model in a English as a foreign language class (EFL) does not only realize an culture available in English speaking countries, but we can look around our culture available around us and integrate them into English language teaching. Many studies have highlighted that describing culture particularly target language culture in EFL – class is necessary because – language is considered as carrier of culture. Moreover, integrating local culture – it also interesting because local culture is built on, available everywhere around us, it is already spoken, and accessible, therefore it is not time consuming. It is cheaper and easier to be implemented. Moreover, it advances cooperative learning which improves interdependency and promotes students to live in globalized world. Moving from teaching materials, local culture is rich for its diversity and helps students to develop their identity by sharing about their own culture and by learning about others. Through differences or similarities, they at, start an understanding that each of them is different, and understanding that each of them has a culture which is interesting and beneficial to learn it.

KEY WORDS

EFL (English as foreign language), local culture