

TECHNIQUES OF TEACHING ESL VOCABULARY

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Abstract

The article investigates the techniques used by a teacher of English in presenting the meaning and form of vocabulary. Commonly, there are several techniques concerning the teaching of vocabulary.

Keywords: vocabulary, techniques, lexical items, word, content, ESL.

This research results aimed at investigating the techniques used by a teacher of English in presenting the meaning and form of vocabulary. Commonly, there are several techniques concerning the teaching of vocabulary. However, there are a few things that have to be remembered by most English teachers if they want to present a new vocabulary or lexical items to their students. It means that the English teachers want students to remember new vocabulary. Then, it needs to be learnt, practiced, and revised to prevent students from forgetting. Techniques employed by teachers depend on some factors, such as the content, time availability, and its value for the learners. This makes teachers have some reasons in employing certain techniques in presenting vocabulary. In presenting one planned vocabulary item, the teacher usually combined more than one technique, instead of employing one single technique. Teachers, furthermore, are suggested to employ planned vocabulary presentation as various as possible.

Here are some techniques of teaching vocabulary as stated by Brewster, Ellis, and Girard [2, 115].

Using Objects. Using this technique includes the use of realia, visual aids, and demonstration. They can function to help learners in remembering vocabulary better, because our memory for objects and pictures is very reliable and visual techniques can act as cues for remembering words. In addition, Gairns & Redman state that real objects technique is inappropriately employed for beginners or young learners and when presenting concrete vocabulary [23, 220].

Objects can be used to show meanings when the vocabulary consist of concrete nouns. Introducing a new word by showing the real object often helps learners to memorize the word through visualization. Objects in the classroom or things brought to the classroom can be used.

Drawing. Objects can either be drawn on the blackboard or drawn on flash cards. The latter can be used again and again in different contexts if they are made with cards

and covered in plastic. They can help young learners easily understand and realize the main points that they have learned in the classroom.

Using Illustrations and Pictures. Pictures connect students' prior knowledge to a new story and in the process, help them learn new words. There are plenty of vocabularies that can be introduced by using illustrations or pictures. They are excellent means of making the meaning of unknown words clear. They should be used as often as possible. The list of pictures includes: posters, flashcards, wall charts, magazine pictures, board drawings, stick figures and photographs.

Pictures for vocabulary teaching come from many sources. Apart from those drawn by the teacher or students, they are sets of colorful pictures intended for schools. Pictures cut out of newspapers and magazines are very useful as well. Nowadays many readers, vocabulary books and course books contain a vast number of attractive pictures that present the meaning of basic words. The teacher can use learning materials provided by the school. They can also make their own visual aids or used pictures from magazines. Visual support helps learners understand the meaning and helps to make the word more memorable.

Contrast. Some words are easily explained to learners by contrasting it with its opposite, for instance, the word "good" contrasted with the word "bad". But some words are not. It is almost impossible to contrast the words whose opposite is the gradable one. When the word "white" is contrasted with the word "black", there is an "in between" word "grey". Furthermore, verb "contrast" means to show a difference, like photos that reveal how much weight someone lost by contrasting the "before" and "after" shots.

Many more studies have also shown that vocabulary is best acquired if it is similar to what is already learnt, it is not surprising that learning synonyms is a way to expand our vocabulary. Learning about synonyms is important also because this is how dictionaries are organized. Putting bilingual dictionaries aside, mono-lingual dictionaries essentially use words to explain words, and in this process, synonyms are often used.

Enumeration. An enumeration is a collection of items that is a complete, ordered listing of all of the items in that collection. It can be used to present meaning. In other words, this technique helps when any word is difficult to explain visually. We can say "clothes" and explain this by enumerating or listing various items. Teacher may list a number of clothes e.g. dress, skirt, trousers etc, and then the meaning of the word "clothes" will become clear. The same is true of 'vegetable' or 'furniture'.

Mime, Expressions and Gestures. Klippel implies that "mime or gesture is useful if it emphasizes the importance of gestures and facial expression on communication. At the essence it can not only be used to indicate the meaning of a word found in reading passage, but also in speaking activity as it stresses mostly on

communication. Many words can be introduced through mime, expressions, and gestures. For example, adjectives: "sad", "happy"; mime and taking a hat off your head to teach hat and soon.

Several studies have emphasized the role of gestures in second language (L2) acquisition. Teachers tend to gesture a lot, especially when addressing young learners and/or beginners. It is commonly acknowledged that "teaching gestures" capture attention and make the lesson more dynamic. Using analyses of video recordings of English lessons to French students, Tellier determined three main roles for teaching gestures: management of the class (to start/end an activity, to question students, request silence, etc.), evaluation (to show a mistake, to correct, to congratulate, etc.) and explanation to give indications on syntax, underline specific prosody, explain new vocabulary, etc.) [4, 145]. Teaching gestures appear in various shapes: hand gestures, facial expressions, pantomime, body movements, etc. They can either mime or symbolize something and they help learners to infer the meaning of a spoken word or expression, providing that they are unambiguous and easy to understand. This teaching strategy is thus relevant for comprehension. However, its utility may depend on the kind of gesture used by the teacher. It has been highlighted that foreign emblems, for instance, may lead to misunderstandings when it is not known by the learners.

In addition to supporting comprehension, teaching gestures may also be relevant for learners' memorization process. Indeed, many second language teachers who use gestures as a teaching strategy declare that they help learners in the process of memorizing the second language lexicon. Many of them have noticed that learners can retrieve a word easily when the teacher produces the gesture associated with the lexical item during the lesson. Others have seen learners (especially young ones) spontaneously reproducing the gesture when saying the word. The effect of gestures on memorization is thus something witnessed by many but hardly explored on a systematic and empirical basis.

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