

VOCABULARY TEACHING IMPLICATIONS FOR DEVELOPING LINGUISTIC AND COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCES

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Annotation: Language vocabulary consists of so many and so diversified language elements that its study and learning is far from being just simple memorizing words and using them in different thematic or situational environments. A quick view at the Internet sites related to vocabulary studies demonstrate a wide range of opinions and approaches to the role of vocabulary knowledge in language learning – from the extreme view that the main goal is to “communicate ideas”, no matter what words or grammar or pronunciation you use, to the consideration that the more elaborate the vocabulary is the deeper your language skills and linguistic insight are and the higher your professional prestige is.

Key words: Vocabulary studies, lexicology, metalanguage, linguistic theory, vocabulary teaching methodology, linguistic competence

Years ago a prominent Czech linguist Leonard Lipka, wrote in his book of lexicology that in the middle of the 20th century the term *lexicology* was not often found in most dictionaries and in various linguistic handbooks. It is only in the 90-ies of the previous century the lexicon as a linguistic level, and Lexicology as the discipline concerned with it, stopped being “the poor relations of Linguistics, or the Cinderella of linguistic theory, as in the heyday of generative grammar, when the lexicon was regarded as “the full set of irregularities” of a language. Vocabulary studies have been rediscovered with the advent of Cognitive Linguistics. This still-developing approach is itself the outcome of interdisciplinary contacts between linguists and psychologists, which have proved exceedingly fruitful in other areas as well (Lipka 1990).

In this century language teaching methodology it is commonly accepted that without productive vocabulary knowledge very little can be conveyed and acquired. The emerging modern linguistic study areas such as pragmalinguistics, linguoculturology and cognitive linguistics are closely connected and stipulated by the recognition of the elusiveness and interpretability sovereignty of the vocabulary behavior in various discourses, in contrast to more or less rigid grammar and phonetic regularities. One of the key indicators of our success at school, at universities, in research and indeed, in life, is believed to be our vocabulary, and “the reason for this is simply that the knowledge anyone has about a topic is based on the vocabulary of that information” (Sprenger 2013).

Within the Modern English Lexicology course taught at English teachers training universities the students learn the basic characteristics of the vocabulary, the basic features of lexical units, such as their morphological structure, functional and semantic classification of lexical units and ways of semantic change, etymological characteristics and word-formation patterns, the peculiarities of set expressions and idioms, principles of lexicological analysis and classification of the vocabulary units, and they apply and improve their own vocabulary research skills through working on practical exercises and texts' analysis related to the vocabulary analysis and classification. At this course for the first time they get acquainted with the concepts of vocabulary as an object and metalanguage used to describe it. The metalanguage itself represents a difficulty for the students, that is why it is advisable to begin with a word story and then proceed to the explanation of the term. This process is necessary to make sure that the students understand the word and its basic linguistic features. This is a vital step in the word memorization process as well as in the nurturing of the linguistic competence. During word formation classes it is recommended to play games with the words. This can be done as 'a group work'. The students "imitate" the word creating patterns, such as compounding, blending or back-formation, and rehearse them in contexts, letting their peers guess the word, its meaning and explain the mechanism of the meaning change. Such exercises are just as important as formal ones. Putting students in pairs or groups and letting them discuss their definitions of such notions as lexemes, meaning and reference, denotation and connotation, semantic change and its mechanisms is a good way to see if all students are storing the same information. Games are a brain-compatible strategy for reinforcing learning. Actively processing vocabulary words in multiple ways allows the brain to store information in multiple memory systems, thus making access to that information easier with multiple triggers or cues (Sprenger, 2010).

By the end of the course the graduates acquire the desired competences to identify, analyse and assess the status and pragmatic potential of various lexical units, and are able to describe the word as the basic language unit, its structural, semantic and functional characteristics; describe the differences between various types of vocabulary units – morphemes, words and set expressions; carry out the meaning analysis and semantic classification of the vocabulary into semantic classes, such as synonyms, antonyms, homonyms and others. They learn how to distinguish and explain various types of morphological structures and types of stems; describe the structural, semantic and functional differences between grammatical and derivational morphemes. They can determine various types of word formation and their relevance for the modern vocabulary enrichment; identify productive and non-productive ways of word building, present valid examples and explain the ways of creating neologisms. They can distinguish the different types of stable word groups, explain the basic principles of

their classifications and ways of forming, describe them from the point of view of their idiomaticity and linguocultural specificity. They become aware of the techniques of the etymological analysis of the vocabulary units, learn differentiating features between native and borrowed vocabulary units, can identify basic regional and territorial variations of the English vocabulary. The final assessment can be conducted in the form of the complex lexicological analysis of the given text – an extract from original English text, preceded with a list of 15 questions related to the semantic, structural, word-formation, phraseological, etymological and other aspects of the text's vocabulary, by applying proper resources and attending to pragmatic, discourse-based factors (Riemer 2010).

Vocabulary is far from being just words. Vocabulary can be defined as the sum-total of the language units, including meaningful chunks of the words named morphemes, free words forms named lexemes and structurally and semantically inseparable word groups named stable phrasemes, using just one of the linguistic set of terms to describe the relevant language elements comprising the lexicon. Vocabulary study is the domain of Lexicology which is rightly a part and parcel of professional language learning programmes in this country.

In the Lexicology course the stock of words is not simply regarded as a list of isolated elements. Lexicologists try to find out generalizations and regularities and especially consider relations between elements. English Lexicology is therefore concerned with systems, paradigms and word structures, not with a mere agglomeration of words, and it covers the fundamentals of the word theory and of the main problems associated with English vocabulary, its characteristics and subdivisions (Елисеева 2003).

Vocabulary studies is truly about words – where they come from, how they change, how they relate to each other and how we use them to view the world (Bauer 1998). The fundamental theoretical knowledge about the composition of the English vocabulary is aimed at developing linguistic competences and practical skills required for the professional teaching of the English language.

The Modern English Lexicology course aims to enable students to understand and interpret the magic of the Word, its role in the vocabulary building-up and enlargement, which involves awareness of the structural, semantic, word-formation and phraseological aspects of the English vocabulary. It also looks at etymological feature of the language, its role in the creative force and intercultural relevance, the linguistic and communicative appropriateness of the semantic classification of the vocabulary in the language performance. The practical classes in lexicological analysis of the lexicon units and literary extracts are aimed at developing their socio-linguistic competences, language intuition and enriching their professional linguistic and communicative thesaurus and make the students comprehend the links between the

language theories and the reality of living speech, on the one hand, and the language-learning and language-teaching processes, on the other, keeping in mind that the majority of EFL students are future English teachers.

The extralinguistic reality as well as social and cultural phenomena can no longer be separated from a linguistic science. The pragmatic information and the ways of its drawing from the text under analysis is incorporated in the lexicology course as the importance of discourse analysis in the vocabulary research has been widely acknowledged in modern language teaching pedagogy. It is the inalienable responsibility of the language teacher to draw on the insights of modern linguistics, on the internal and external aspects of the language normative behavior and its dynamic change. The effective modern vocabulary teaching and learning strategies should have the nature of the linguistic and contextual dimensions and dynamics, incorporated into learners' language learning process. Teachers should strive for developing a dynamic view of the language change which is a part of the sociolinguistic reality. Lexicology gives them a foundation for understanding and accepting linguistic development and change and increases students' awareness of vocabulary prescription and variation, to cope with the global English language universe successfully.

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