

Practical Ideas to Teach English Vocabulary

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Abstract: *Obviously, in any language learning process vocabulary plays a crucial role whenever a language learner wants to use new words with confidence and be successful in each field of the language, even if it is practical or theoretical. In this purpose, teaching language learners by the help of workable and effective ways is more important than we think.*

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Introduction

Considering a great many of new words young language learners requires learning them effectively without challenging, this means teachers should pay attention to the way of learning new words. Though it is crucial for learners to use correct grammar and sentence structures, words are the main carriers of meaning. This means that the more vocabulary language learners are able to use accurately, the better they understand English and make themselves understood. Have you ever thought that language learners need inspiration in order to encounter a new word 10 to 16 times effectively “learn” it according to recent research? To effectively acquire new vocabulary, students have to go through four important stages:

Materials and methods

Stage 1: Regarding and understanding new vocabulary. Teachers should introduce and give some more information about English vocabulary. For example, introducing nouns, things, objects, animals, etc... In this case, working with visual objects work best with concrete nouns, but try to go beyond illustrations and flashcards. And teachers had better to use real elements that learners can see, touch, smell or even taste. For instance, ask your learners to respond non-verbally to the flashcards through actions. Appeal to all of your students, senses! More, introducing adjectives help them to learn new words easily. In fact, opposites, like “big” and “small”, “long” and “short”, are often described with visual objects, and they may help learners to catch the words and their meanings. In contrast, another case where realia will help you teach new adjectives; giving real life justifications is wonderful for certain words such as “soft” and “rough”, adjectives are likely to take precious time of the class to explain. So it is better to use real elements as visuals in language learning classes. If it comes to more advanced and complicated adjectives, like “remarkable”, “picturesque”, “gorgeous” or “magnificent”, bring in photos of eminent sights from around the globe like the Tajmahal, Egyptian pyramids, the Eiffel Tower, etc... then use some other adjectives to describe sightseeing in ways that clearly picture their meaning.

Stage 2 Use their imagination. As we are language learners it is clear that learning new vocabulary without considering their exact meaning seems quite difficult to memorize. But if it comes to young learners there are some exceptions. More clearly, when young learners come across new words, tutors should encourage them to learn the new vocabularies by using their imagination. They can act them out in certain interesting role plays, games and other simple and stimulating activities. In this way of learning learners are involved in the contextualized learning process logically and intensely. For example, can they move like tigers or elephants? Or ask them to jump like a kangaroo.

Stage 3 Use songs and music, cartoons, real life objects, or puzzles, remember the more you mix the better they distinguish. Remember the difference between recognizing and producing words: to drill identification the words have to be provided by you; then children use them to fill in blanks or match them. For students to effectively and accurately make vocabulary, they should automatically bring to mind the words. Take as an example music and song. Music is an appealing and fun way to teach new vocabulary as well as proper pronunciation and some grammar. Songs are easily learnt and kept in young learners mind. For you learners, you can use one of the most interesting songs “Head and Shoulders, Knees and Toes”. Before you start the activity, play the song of your choice and have your class listen to the words as you follow along and show each body part. As this song comprises visual, verbal, kinesthetic and aural learners, any learners can understand and get easily. In order to make the lessons more interesting, you can use this method with older learners too. And they take a listen to the song “Parts of the Body” with or without its video. This melody is catchy and has a great deal of repetition that helps learners commit to memory with greater comfort.

Stage 3 Antonyms and synonyms. To build up more vocabulary, it is an effective way to learn by heart new word with their antonyms and synonyms. This gives the chance to memorize twice as many words than single one. In order to make a bigger effect on your students’ learning process, you had better to use pictures to illustrate sentences, or to put words into easy and understandable sentences. Making a short story is also efficient way to use and make new vocabulary into their daily words. As they use unfamiliar new words in their story, they comprehend their meaning from the context and compare them with their synonyms or antonyms. When they practice new vocabulary, they recall their relevant versions spontaneously and enrich their knowledge in lexicon. The following is an example of how to use opposites that can be used with beginner-level students:

Vocabulary: day/night, sun/moon, Open/closed, black/white. Another practical way to absorb antonyms and synonyms into the lesson is by asking easy questions in which learners get to choose the proper answers that suit their needs.

Stage 4 Spelling. Teaching young learners by spelling their letters can boost their memory as well as learning new words at the same time. Obviously it seems quiet challenging for the first time, but after practicing for some times, they can feel more confident with their awareness in English vocabulary. Furthermore, such methods make students more active during the lesson and think concrete objects fast. There are certain common games that used in English classes. For example, Sparkle - An old game but a good one. Have all members of the class stand up, choose a spelling word and have each student say one letter to spell out the word. After the last letter has been said the word 'Sparkle' is called out and the next student in line is out of the game! For example: Word = Cat, Student 1 - 'C', Student 2 - 'A', Student 3 'T', Student 4 - ' Sparkle', Student 5 is out! Spelling Bulls-eye - Particularly good fun with an energetic class! Split you class into 2 teams. Students go head to head to spell target words, the winner uses a soft ball (or scrunched up paper) to aim at a bulls-eye (circular target) and score points for their team. Pick your teams carefully so students are paired against those of similar ability. Spelling Battleships - Loosely based on the traditional board game, words take the place of the ships. Assign students into pairs. Each student has two copies of a battleships grid (10 x 10 square, labeled A-J across and 1-10 down). They put each of their words into the grid without their partner seeing. Then you play like regular battleships. Guess a square (e.g. B7) and the partner calls out 'hit' (and tells you the letter) or 'miss'). Students can try to guess the place of words if they feel confident, but it costs them 1 turn. It helps them to become familiar with the words and recognize patterns.

References:

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