



HOW WORDS ARE LEARNED

Amonova Vazira

Abstract

It is undeniable that learning vocabulary presents serious difficulties to the learners and teachers alike in the English Language classrooms, but previous studies done on the teaching of vocabularies have shown that there are many techniques of teaching them that can be employed in the English Language classrooms. Besides the techniques suggested by the linguists and researchers, the paper also presents strategies on teaching vocabulary from various sources like magazines and research journals in the area. Examples of the teaching strategies are given in relation to the strategies suggested.

Keywords

mnemonics, vocabulary size, gamification, realia

Introduction

Learning vocabulary often demonstrates significant challenges, including forgetting words, limited exposure to authentic language contexts, proper usage of word meanings, and effective retention or memorization of vocabulary. These obstacles can hinder language acquisition and make the learning process daunting for students. However, integrating useful strategies, namely gamification, mnemonics, realia and etc, into language learning has emerged as a powerful solution to these difficulties. By incorporating these in the class we can boost students' motivation, provide immersive learning experiences, and create more engaging and effective language practice opportunities.

Vocabulary is obviously a very important element within a language as a overwhelming majority of meaning is carries lexically: and, therefore, something to be taken into consideration both in Second and Foreign Language Teaching-although not only the one that conveys meaning. There are certainly other elements such as grammar, stress, rhythm, intonation, tone of voice ,pauses, hesitations or silences, not to mention the use of non-vocal phenomeno such as kinesic and proxemic features. Leaning a language cannot be reduced , of course, to only learning vocabulary, but it is also true that “no matter how well the student learns grammar, no matter how successfully the sounds are mastered, without knowing enough words to express a wide range of meanings, communication in a Language Second just cannot happen in a meaningful way”(Mc Carthy 1990:VIII), an idea defended by many applied linguists, e.g. Allen (1983: 1), Wallace (1988: 9), Corder (Rossner and Bolitho 1990: 113), Taylor (1990: 1), Willis (1990 :1-14) etc.

“Without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed.” This is how the linguist David Wilkins summed up the importance of vocabulary learning. His view is echoed in this advice to students from a recent coursebook (Dellar H and Hocking D, Innovations, LTP): “If you spend most of your time studying grammar, your English will not improve very much. You won’t see most improvement unless you learn more words and expressions. You can say very little with grammar, but you can say almost anything with words!”

Using different techniques to help students understand and learn new words

There are so many ways that you can help students to understand new words. You can translate words and you can ask students to guess meanings. At first, students may find it difficult to guess the meanings of words, You can show them how to guess meanings by using their existing knowledge of English, their

understanding of the other words in the lesson, and their knowledge of the word. For instance: There was his assistant on the line and I told him I had come in a wheelchair from India to write about my travels in Britain.

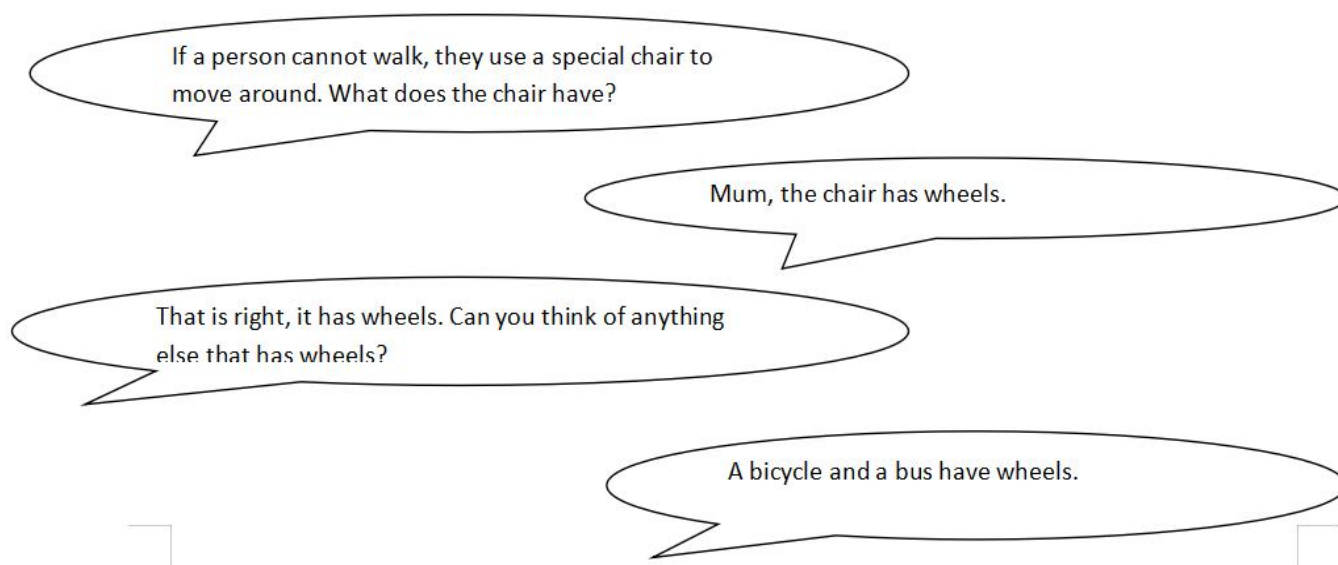
Students can guess the meaning of the word “wheelchair” if they understand the words “wheel” and “chair” and by their knowledge of the world – they understand that a disabled person use a wheelchair, and they may have seen one. They can also make a good guess of the word “propelled” once they understand the word “wheelchair” and the topic of the lesson. They can see that it is a verb. It is used as part of the past perfect tense, and it has the ending “-ed”. When they know it is a verb, they can guess that it involves movement. By understanding how a person uses a wheelchair, they can guess the exact meaning of the word. Other ways that you can help students to understand new words include:

-Using a picture or a real object: You could draw a picture of a wheelchair on the board, use a picture from the textbook or cut out a picture from a magazine or newspaper.

-Using mime or gesture: You could mime a person propelling themselves in a wheelchair and ask students to say what the word is in their home language to check that they understand.

-Giving examples of the words in a different context and asking students to guess: For example, you could say: The boat was propelled across the water by the wind.

-Explaining what the word means in English: Ask questions to make sure that your students understand the meaning.



Learning vocabulary using Gamification tool

Gamification is defined as the application of game-based strategies, aesthetics, and game thinking to engage people, stimulate action, enhance learning, and solve problems”(Kapp, 2012) One of the goals of gamification is to impact people’s behavior via perceptions and emotions produced by games, thus motivating user, customer, worker dedication and commitment(Park et al,2014). Gamification in learning has been implemented to make the process of learning more fun and engaging for learners. The effects of learning through play should not be underrated because, as Piaget(1962) mentioned long before, play is vitally important element of one’s cognitive advancement from early life to adult years. Web-based games may encourage interactive problem solving through constant interaction between players and the games they are playing, as well as engage players through the use of a plot, noises, and pictures that can excite the senses (Perry in Endarto,2018:125). As a gamification tool, Kahoot is the main machine for the growth of vocabulary, language and social skills.

Kahoot!

Kahoot is a game-based learning platform that is used as educational technology in schools and other educational institutions. Its learning games are multiple- choice quizzes created by users that can be accessed via a web browser or the Kahoot app. The ability to use Kahoot! As a student response device can

enable students who are anxious or introverted to participate more openly, making the lesson more successful for them(Stowell and Nelson, 2017)

In addition, Kahoot! Offers direct input to both the instructor and the student(Stowell and Nelson, 2007), which acts as a formative evaluation. It appears that students have the ability to self-assess their success by the use of Kahoot!. Moreover, teachers will gauge the success of their students in vocabulary acquisition while at the same time providing a fun and engaging means of facilitating learning and retention. Kahoot allows teachers to design online quizzes that students may access via their smartphone, tablets, or computers. The teacher might create quizzes or platform offers based on the topic being taught, and then share the URL to the platform with the students. Students can use their cellphones or other supported devices to access the platform. The features of Kahoot! Include the opportunity to earn points, interesting sound effects, and inspiring music (Wang and Lieberoth, 2016:136). To sum up, Kahoot! Is a real-time classroom response system that is based on a game. Multiple choice questions may be created in interesting format and played with all students. Kahoot! Audio and music provide users with a good learning experience that stimulates engagement.

Improving vocabulary with mnemonics

Mnemonics are a time-tested method for boosting memory and enriching vocabulary. Mnemonic instruction is a way to help students remember information and vocabulary more effectively and easily. It involves linking unfamiliar to be learned information with familiar already known information through the use of a visual picture or letter, word combinations. To deal with the learning problem, memory strategies are of great help. They fell into sub-strategies including grouping, associating, elaborating, placing new words into a context, using imagery, semantic mapping, using keywords, representing sounds in memory, structured reviewing, using physical response or sensation, and using mechanical techniques (Wang and Lee 2007).

Jonson and Obi(1993) claim that the use of mnemonic strategies may help learning disabled students in the area of spelling and improve their long-term memory of vocabulary. Wu and Chang (2005) reveal that memory is the important medium for learning and gaining knowledge in a special field and also supported that teaching students memory strategies would enhance primary school pupils' English vocabulary learning.

Mnemonic strategies

Key word : This strategy helps learners to connect the new word to a keyword. The Keyword is a concrete English word which has some similarity in sound to some part of the foreign one. After that, the learner creates a memorable mental image of the keyword to the English equivalent (translation) to show their interactions and remember complex information(Keskinkiliç and Sünbül 2011).Safa and Hamzavi (2013) investigate the effect of using key word strategy of vocabulary instruction on the learning and retention of vocabulary over long term in a normal EFL classroom context. Results indicated that participants in the key word group outperformed the memorization group at a significant level in both their learning and retention of the newly learnt vocabularies.

Acronyms & backronym : An acronym is a word or name formed as an abbreviation from the initial components in a phrase or a word, usually individual letters (as in NATO or laser) and sometimes syllables (as in Benelux). According to Oxford (1990), using acronyms is a kind of placing new words into a context in order to remember them better. Backronym is a specially constructed phrase that is supposed to be the source of a word. Backronym is a combination of "backward" and "acronym" and has been defined as a "reverse acronym. For example, pupils are given a word and asked to form a sentence where each word in the sentence starts with a letter stated in the given word.

Conclusion

Vocabulary is an essential lesson for students to master in English. As a teacher must have many strategies to make students are interested and not feel bored in the classroom. Moreover, building a strong vocabulary is crucial for effective communication in any language. It not only enhances your ability to express yourself clearly but also improves your listening and reading comprehension. The process of learning new words can be enjoyable and rewarding, and there are numerous resources and techniques available to help you expand your vocabulary. Whether through reading, using vocabulary apps, or engaging in conversations with others, consistent practice and exposure to new words are essential for vocabulary growth. Ultimately, a rich vocabulary opens up new opportunities for personal and professional success, making it a valuable skill to develop.

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