



Innovative Methods and Approaches in Vocabulary Teaching

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Abstract: In this article was written about teaching methods and approaches of foreign languages, mainly English. Vocabulary is very important part for learning languages and here was discussed about useful points of learning vocabulary.

Key words: method, teaching method, approach, vocabulary stock, innovation, innovative methods, innovative approaches.

However many theories about vocabulary learning process were written, it still remains the matter of memory. Thus, there are several general principles for successful teaching, which are valid for any method. According to Wallace, 1988 the principles are:

- aim – what is to be taught, which words, how many
- need – target vocabulary should respond students' real needs and interests
- frequent exposure and repetition
- meaningful presentation – clear and unambiguous denotation or reference should be assured

Learning vocabulary is a complex process. The students' aim to be reached in learning vocabulary process is primarily their ability to recall the word at will and to recognize it in its spoken and written form. Generally, knowing a word involves knowing its form and its meaning at the basic level. In deeper aspects it means the abilities to know its (Harmer 1993):

- 1) Meaning, i.e. relate the word to an appropriate object or context
- 2) Usage, i.e. knowledge of its collocations, metaphors and idioms, as well as style and register (the appropriate level of formality), to be aware of any connotations and associations the word might have
- 3) Word formation, i.e. ability to spell and pronounce the word correctly, to know any derivations (acceptable prefixes and suffixes),
- 4) Grammar, i.e. to use it in the appropriate grammatical form

How words are remembered

Unlike the learning of grammar, which is essentially a rule based system, vocabulary knowledge is largely a question of accumulating individual items.

The general rule seems to be a question of memory. And during the process of teaching and learning vocabulary an important problem occurs: How does memory work? Researchers into the workings of memory distinguish between the following systems (Thornbury, 2002)

- short-term store
- working memory

➤ long-term memory

Short-term store

Short-term store is the brain capacity to hold a limited number of items of information for periods of time up to a few seconds. It is the kind of memory that is involved in repeating a word that you have just heard the teacher modelling. But successful vocabulary learning involves more than holding words for a few seconds. To integrate words into long-term memory they need to be subjected to different kinds of operations.

Working memory

Working memory means focusing on word long enough to perform operations on them. It means the information is manipulated via the senses from external sources and/or can be downloaded from the long-term memory. Material remains in working memory for about twenty seconds. The existence of articulator loop enables this new material processing. It works a bit like audiotape going round a round again. It assures the short-term store to be kept refreshed. The ability to hold a word in working memory is a good predictor of language learning aptitude. The better ability to hold words in working memory the smoother the process of learning foreign languages is.

Long-term memory

Long-term memory can be seen as kind of filing system. Unlike working memory, which has a limited capacity and no permanent content, this kind of memory has an enormous capacity and its contents are durable over time. However, to ensure moving new materials into permanent long-term memory, requires number of principles to be followed, described by Thornbury, 2002:

- Repetition – repetition of encounters with a word is very important, useful and effective. If the word is met several times over space interval during reading activities, students have a very good chance to remember it for a long time.
- Retrieval - another kind of repetition. Activities, which require retrieval, such as using the new items in written tasks, help students to be able to recall it again in the future.
- Spacing - it is useful to split memory work over a period of time rather than to mass it together in a single block.
- Pacing – to respect different learning styles and pace, students should be ideally given the opportunity to do memory work individually.
- Use - putting words to use, preferably in an interesting way, is the best way of ensuring they are added to long-term memory. This is so called “Use it or lose it” principle.
- Cognitive depth - the more decisions students make about the word and the more cognitively demanding these decisions are, the better the word is remembered.
- Personal organizing - personalization significantly increased the probability that students will remember new items. It is achieved mainly through conversation and role-playing activities.
- Imaging – easily visualized words are better memorable than those that do not evoke with any pictures. Even abstract words can be associated with some mental image.
- Mnemonics – tricks to help retrieve items or rules that are stored in memory. The best kinds of mnemonics are visuals and keyword techniques.
- Motivation - strong motivation itself does not ensure that words will be remembered. Even unmotivated students remember words if they have to face appropriate tasks.
- Attention - it is not possible to improve vocabulary without a certain degree of conscious attention.

Vocabulary teaching and learning is a constant challenge for teachers as well as students because historically there has been minimal focus on vocabulary instruction in the ESL classroom. Due to

this, an increased emphasis on vocabulary development is crucial for the English language learner in the process of language learning.

Vocabulary is central to language and of critical importance to the typical language learner. The prominent role of vocabulary knowledge in foreign language learning has been increasingly recognized (Rodriguez & Sadoski, 2000). The last decade witnessed a growing interest in the 'lexical approach' to EFL teaching. Besides, developments in 'lexical semantics' and the 'mental lexicon' have prompted the development of the 'semantic field theory', 'semantic networks' or 'semantic grid' strategies, which present and organize words in terms of interrelated lexical meanings (Gu & Johnson, 1996, p. 645). The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the pedagogic implications of 'Semantic Field Theory' for EFL vocabulary instruction.

The 'semantic field' theory suggests that the lexical content of a language is best treated not as a mere aggregation of independent words or an unstructured list of words but as a collection of interrelating networks of relations between words (Stubbs, 2001). The meaning of most words is governed, in part, by the presence in the language of other words whose semantic functions are related in one or more ways to the same area of situational environment or culture (Robins, 1980). A very simple example of a semantic field is the set of kinship terms: father, mother, brother, sister, son, daughter, uncle, aunt, etc. Clearly, all these words share some aspect of meaning that is not present in the word class, for instance.

It is noteworthy that words may be grouped together (related to each other) according to different criteria. Animals, for example, may be grouped in terms of physical or perceptual features; they may be grouped in terms of nonphysical features, such as pet, wild, food, etc.

In a very practical situation, the grading of hotels, the word good has a very different meaning when it is used nontechnically (in the field of good, bad, indifferent, etc.) than when it is used 'technically' by some travel agents, in a strictly limited system of comparative grading as the lowest in the field of first-class, luxurious, superior, good (Robins, 1980).

From a stylistic point of view, the verbs steal, pilfer, lift, pinch, swipe, and snitch may be subgrouped in terms of being formal (steal, pilfer), colloquial (lift, pinch), and slang (swipe, snitch).

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