

EFFECTIVE WAYS OF TEACHING ENGLISH VOCABULARY TO YOUNG LEARNERS

Language is a means of communication. Although it is not only coming from communication among human beings, it is certainly, the most important for us [5]. English has four aspects and skills that must be known by the learners. The four aspects are spelling, pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar. Meanwhile, the four skills, namely, listening, reading, writing and speaking. Those four aspects can develop the four skills in English.

This paper focuses on one of the aspects that can build the four skills in English. The aspect is known as vocabulary.

Vocabulary is crucial to a pupil's language development and communication skills. After all, without appropriate words, it's difficult to relate thoughts, ideas, and feelings about who we are and how we interpret the world around us.

In order to teach vocabulary to young learners, we need to be aware of the strategies and methods in its teaching. Accordingly, it led us to the writing of this article.

Literature analysis indicates that the question of the study of effective ways of teaching English vocabulary to young learners was explored by such linguists as Virginia French Allen, Paul Bloom, James Nattinger, Michael Wallace, David Wilkins and others.

This study aims at identifying effective ways in teaching English vocabulary to young learners.

Language is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires. In addition, there are some basic components of language that help us express our thoughts and feelings, they are vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar and phonology. Thus, the language would be very useful if we communicate with others to get the meaning of the language itself; on the contrary, it can be useless if we do not use it.

To understand the language, we have to invent the meaning of words as many as possible either in a sentence or in whole texts. Language is a systematic communication tool that may transfer ones' ideas or feelings through body language, signs, sounds and gesture. On the other hand, by using language, one can express his ideas, feeling or information either orally or in a written form [1].

Because the definition of language refers to the expression of certain meanings, of course, we may not neglect the role of vocabulary chosen. It plays an important role as means of understanding the meaning of words correctly. Moreover, M. Wallace argues that "there is a sense in which learning a foreign language is basically a matter of learning vocabulary in target language" [4].

In order to penetrate, how to teach a child to know a word, first we may

understand why this child should know it. What does it mean to know a word?

Studies have shown that vocabulary and grammar are intertwined, so knowing a word involves knowing how it collocates or what “chunks” it can occur in. Young learners learn effectively when language is presented in chunks, so this approach is common in course materials. To “know” a word involves the following facets of a word:

- a. Its cognate or semantic referent, i.e. its meaning;
- b. The letters that make up the word, i.e. spelling and the visual “look” of the word;
- c. The sounds that make up the word, i.e. its pronunciation.

For example, for the word “nurse”, learners need to know it is a male or female health professional, that it is spelled n-u-r-s-e and is pronounced /nɜːs/.

There is also the question of learners not knowing all the possible meanings of a word – and this is common in the young learner classroom. For example, children are likely to first learn “mouse” as an animal and then, at a later stage, learn that it is a computing device. There is also the fact that young learners working at the edge of their competence often produce neologisms that show learning even though they are not correct forms: consider the utterance “wind snake” for “flag”, which results from L1 transfer, or “tooth doctor” for “dentist”, which uses existing language to convey a concept. Such utterances will benefit from the teacher teaching the correct forms.

In order to help young learners learn vocabulary effectively, we need to employ a range of strategies. First, we need to think why the young learner wants to know the words we teach as they are much more likely to remember them if they need them or want to use. One way a teacher can do this is to get the learners to draw or write the words they already know and then draw or write the L1 translation of words they want to know. This can be followed by a spot of peer teaching where learners who know the second set of words teach them to the learners who want to know them.

Another way to help young learners learn new words is to explore ways of recording vocabulary. For example, a teacher shows learners some examples of picture dictionaries, words with sentences in English explaining what they mean and mind maps linking words and ideas. Then a teacher discusses why these strategies are helpful and encourages the learners to use these strategies when noting down new words.

If we want our young learners to be effective learners of vocabulary, we have to invest in teaching them strategies that help them to remember the words and produce them when they need. Using the strategies above will help them develop their vocabulary and increase the total number of words they know [2].

Therefore, D. Wilkins suggests that “without grammar, very little can be conveyed but without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed.” In short, it can be worded that it is quite sensible to help provide the students with teaching of vocabulary as much as attention to other aspects of language presented, such as grammar, pronunciation, and spelling [5].

To solve these problems, English teachers, of course, have to provide practical techniques on teaching vocabulary that the students are able to develop their learning of new words independently. J. Nattinger identifies that “guessing vocabulary from context is the most frequently way of discovering the meaning of new word” [3].

To effectively acquire new vocabulary, learners must go through these three essential stages:

1. Noticing and understanding new words;
2. Recognizing new words;
3. Producing vocabulary.

During *Stage 1* visual elements work best with concrete nouns, but it is recommended to go beyond flashcards and illustrations trying to use real objects whenever possible, or even sounds, smells, and tastes therefore appealing to all of pupils' senses.

At *Stage 2* matching, filling in the blanks (with options) and various games can be very helpful in teaching vocabulary to young learners.

In *Stage 3* it is better to use other activities, such as descriptions, mind maps or brainstorming. A teacher may tell students they need to think of words they can use to describe the weather. She/he writes “weather” in the centre of a blackboard and circle it, then writes every word supplied by students as “rays” that shoot out this circle. They should reply with the previously taught words. A teacher may even have sub-circles shooting off to the side for winter, summer, etc. words. This works great for vocabulary review lessons.

There are some techniques in teaching vocabulary to young learners. All of them are simple that makes them very useful. The most important thing in teaching English vocabulary is to explain pupils why do they need to learn it.

Also, there are some stages of learning that makes this process effective. The stages are visual, verbal techniques, and the use of vocabulary. The use of techniques also should consider the number of aspects in teaching-learning process, such as the teachers' competency, the students' ability, and the allocation of time.

References

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