

THE PROBLEM OF VOCABULARY IN LEARNING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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Annotation: The article discusses the problems of vocabulary in learning foreign language. The author of the article analyses the importance hypothesis of vocabulary, main strategies, vital techniques, different instruction and various approaches (methods) theoretical and practically.

Key words: vocabulary, strategy, knowledge, form.

Learning a second or foreign language, vocabulary serves an important role, since words are useful when we listen, speak, read and write. A reader or a listener needs to recognize words; a writer or a speaker has to utilize words in order to convey ideas. Second or foreign language learners with limited vocabulary will face difficulties in expressing and understanding ideas. Teachers should be aware of these difficulties, and try to facilitate the task for their learners, especially at the very first levels of learning English, in order to construct a strong and rich vocabulary.

Moving from theory to practice, Krashen (1982) provided a theory of second language acquisition. This theory describes some very important hypotheses:

- 1) the acquisition and learning hypothesis,
- 2) the natural order hypothesis,
- 3) the monitor hypothesis,
- 4) the input hypothesis, which is considered the most important one since it attempts to provide further explanations about how language is acquired at different levels; and lastly
- 5) the affective filter hypothesis, which correlates the affective variables with second language acquisition.

Concerning vocabulary learning and teaching, these hypotheses provide both learners and teachers with useful information in order to handle the difficulties which face them to fulfill their goals. Three main linguistic topics, semantics, lexicon, and vocabulary, have been discussed by Hatch and Brown (1995) in their book "Vocabulary, Semantics and Language Education". One can not teach or learn a word without knowing its meaning and form, so that the authors have talked about these concepts following such order. These three terms has been defined as follows:

Recently, the interest on vocabulary was widely progressed. Hiebert, H. and L. Kamil (2005) are among the experts who have studied deeply vocabulary acquisition and instruction. In their book, "Teaching and Learning Vocabulary", they have summarized the findings of scholars, in which they have provided answers to the following questions: 1) How one can learn and teach vocabulary? 2) How can vocabulary learning and teaching influenced by age and culture? 3) What words should be more emphasized in instruction? Consequently, the work clusters around three parts: the first part considers the perspectives on how vocabulary is learned, focusing more on the correlation between vocabulary and reading comprehension; the second part consists of the instructions that enhance vocabulary; the third part presents perspectives on which words to choose for instruction. Still within the same context, Jim Scrivener (2005) has collected numerous strategies and approaches which might help teachers in their classrooms. His book, "Learning Teaching", is considered as a guide to classroom teaching methodology. Exclusively, the author has suggested what he called "toolkits" of possibilities and guidelines useful for teachers. The book is divided into seventeen chapters, ending with helpful appendices and useful indexes. The first chapters dealt with general issues in teaching: classroom activities, classroom management, lessons and courses, and also the four skills (receptive and productive ones). Interestingly, the eleventh chapter dealt with common issues in lexis: what is lexis? How to present lexis in classroom? How to know and remember lexical items? This chapter goes importantly with our main topic. Then, in the chapter before the last, the author suggested a number of instructional tools and aids used

in classroom, these aids could be visual like flashcards and pictures, or audio like songs and music, or both, audio-visual like DVDs and computers. Skimming over these previous books has been very satisfying for us. They have shed light on major points in our research. Mainly, all the works have emphasized the subject of vocabulary teaching and learning. The works of Anderson and Freebody (1979), Hatch and Brown (1995), Nation (2001), Carter (2002), H. Hierbert and L. Kamil (2005) have discussed deeply many theoretical foundations and practical implications related to vocabulary instruction. Beyond that, they have provided lots of strategies and techniques useful in classroom, such as: repetition, guessing from context, and using games...etc. In our research, we are going to highlight, importantly, the use of these technological materials, in vocabulary teaching and learning.

At the same level, the book of Jim Scrivener (2005) has covered many points on learning and teaching English for EFL learners. In his work, Scrivener has discussed vocabulary issues and the use of audio-visual aids, but each subject has been mentioned in a separate chapter. Our work is to combine the vocabulary learning and teaching with the application of audio aids, so that to solve some problems facing learners.

Different methods have been applied in language teaching: grammar translation, direct, audio-lingual, and CLT method. Each of these methods has treated vocabulary teaching differently. First, Richard and Rodgers argue that "Grammar Translation method is a way of studying a language through detailed analysis of its grammar rules, followed by application of this knowledge to the task of translating sentences into and out of the target language"(3). In the phase of vocabulary instruction, this method relies on bilingual lists of words to be memorized. The teacher provides learners with lists of words translated to the L1 and asks them to memorize them. These words are arranged Grammar Translation Method, The Direct Method does not use L1 translation, but it combines word's learning/teaching with pictures, realia or actions (Krashen 135). Third, The Audio Lingual Method supports the mastery of structure and puts the focus on vocabulary instruction after dealing with the structural patterns. Lastly, the CLT Method emphasizes the role of contexts and learner's previous knowledge in vocabulary instruction. These all methods provides useful techniques for instructing foreign language lexis, they can be used exchangeably and they all aim at having successful vocabulary teaching/learning.

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