

The nature of vocabulary or meaningful vocabulary instruction for learners

The nature of vocabulary is important to the process of selecting appropriate instructional strategies that enable students to master the vocabulary they need.

Students typically require more explicit instruction and intensive practice in order to master key vocabulary. Effective strategies for learning vocabulary help students understand and learn new words, make sense of new vocabulary by integrating it with what they already know and remember the meaning of words when encountered at a later date or in new material.

General guidelines for teaching vocabulary

It is helpful to keep in mind several general principles that facilitate acquisition of new vocabulary.

- ❖ Teach new words in the context of a meaningful subject - matter lesson and facilitate student discussion that requires students to use the new word (Ellis & Farmer, 1996 - 2000).
- ❖ Ensure that students hear the correct pronunciation of the word and practice saying it aloud. Hearing the syllable structure and stress pattern of the word facilitates its storage in memory (Fay & Culter, 1977).
- ❖ Teach word parts – root words, base words, prefixes, and suffixes that students will encounter frequently (Jones, 1999).
- ❖ Teach words in related clusters to help students understand how words are related and interrelated (Marinak, et al., 1997).
- ❖ Identify examples / applications and non-examples / non-applications related to the meaning of the new word (Ellis & Farmer, 1996 - 2000).
- ❖ Help students connect new vocabulary to something with which they are already familiar (Ellis & Farmer, 1996 - 2000).
- ❖ Create opportunities for students to paraphrase the definition of a new term so that they can identify the main idea associated with the term and recognize specific bits

of information that clarify its broader, more general core idea (Ellis & Farmer, 1996 - 2000).

- ❖ Offer students the opportunity to acquire new vocabulary using a variety of learning modalities or formats that actively engage them in the learning process (Ellis & Farmer, 1996 - 2000).

Six step model of vocabulary instruction

- **Step one:** The teacher explains a new word, going beyond reciting its definition (tap into prior knowledge of students, use students' imagination).
- **Step two:** Students restate or explain the new word in their own words (verbally and / or in writing).
- **Step three:** Ask students to create a non-linguistic representation of the word (a picture, or symbolic representation, miming).
- **Step four:** Students engage in activities to deepen their knowledge of the new word (compare words, classify terms, write their own analogies and metaphors).
- **Step five:** Students discuss the new word (pair-share, elbow partners, group work).
- **Step six:** Students periodically play games to review new vocabulary (Board, interactive, discussion games or gamification).

Purposes for teaching vocabulary

In my experience, we teach vocabulary for a variety of reasons. It's important to identify vocabulary instruction in your teaching practice by considering why you are doing it. That will help you determine which theories and techniques you ought to use and do not forget about reasons, which are included:

- ✓ Improving reading comprehension in general.
- ✓ Improving subject-specific mastery and performance.
- ✓ Improving writing and speaking skills.
- ✓ Test preparation (KET, PET, FCE, CPE etc.).

- ✓ Deepening students' ability to put their thoughts into the most appropriate word possible.

Conclusion a teacher's thoughtful consideration of the content, purpose, and methodology related to vocabulary instruction is critical to the academic achievement of students who would like to learn, understand, recall, and use new vocabulary meaningfully. The strategies provide the means by which teachers can help at - risk students expand their general vocabularies and attach meaning to technical words. These skills are critical and analytical to academic success in all content areas.

References

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