



EXPLOITATION OF VISUALS TO LEARN VOCABULARY

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ABSTRACT

English is the lingua franca. It is also the official language in most of the countries. Thus the importance of English in the present day context cannot be denied. To learn a language and use it effectively one must have a strong vocabulary. But, building vocabulary is not a simple thing. One of the best ways to make it simple is by using technology. This paper discusses the ways in which vocabulary can be developed using visuals inside classroom. This method would interest them and also would reach them better.

Keywords: *visuals, vocabulary, technology.*

Background To The Study

English is the lingua franca. It is a global language. It plays a very vital role in our everyday life. In India people moving from north to south for education or business mostly use English to communicate. Parliament has also recognised English as an official language along with Hindi. Thus the importance of English in the present day context cannot be denied. Mastering in English language has become a must.

Earlier, English used teaching approaches such as direct method, audiolingualism, which emphasized the importance of teaching grammatical structures. Thus only a few words were introduced. Those words were very limited and also it was related to the grammar structures taught. But, by the beginning of 1970s, a major change came in the teaching of English. The focus shifted from direct method and audiolingualism to the communicative approach. And this approach emphasized the importance of teaching vocabulary. Students were exposed to diverse vocabulary and speaking activity. Many words were introduced and students were encouraged to express their thoughts as much as possible.

Vocabulary is the main tool to use English effectively. But, building vocabulary is not a simple thing. Vocabulary may be defined as the “body of words used in a particular

language.” Vocabulary is the central to English language teaching because without sufficient vocabulary students cannot understand others and also cannot express their own ideas. Lewis (1993) argues that “Lexis is the core or heart of the language.” This shows the importance of vocabulary in the language. Wilkins (1972) says that “... while without grammar a little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed.” This is very true, and this is the reason why people carry dictionaries with them and not grammar books. Mc carthy underlines the importance of vocabulary by saying that “no matter how well the students learn grammar, no matter how well the sounds of L2 are mastered, without words to express a wide range of meanings, communication in L2 just cannot happen in any meaningful way.” Thus vocabulary is one of the most important tools to learn a foreign language. It also forms a basis for the development of all four major skills i.e. reading, writing, listening and speaking. Vocabulary is such an important tool, building it is also equally challenging.

One of the best ways to overcome this challenge is by the use of visuals. Visuals help a lot in building up vocabulary. Visuals help in two ways. It clarifies the material being taught. It also makes learning more permanent. A research suggests that in normal day to day living we learn 3% through taste, 3% through smell, 6% through touch, 13% through hearing and 75% through seeing. Though we use all our senses to learn, most of our learning comes from the things that we see. This research clearly states the importance of visuals in learning. Thus teaching vocabulary using visuals will be one of the easiest and an effective way. Some of the ways in which visuals can be used to teach vocabulary include picture word pairing, semantic mapping and using film projectors.

Picture word pairing

Picture word pairing is one technique in which the picture aids are used alongside a vocabulary word. The picture would illustrate the use of the word or a graphic would explain the meaning further. This simple strategy can help the visual learner to create a mental picture for the vocabulary learned to reinforce the learning. This method helps the learner to remember the words learnt for a longer period of time.

Semantic mapping

Semantic maps also known as word diagram. Semantic mapping vocabulary instruction is a visual strategy that applies well in a number of ways. In this method a web is used to visually show the relationship between words, including synonyms, antonyms, and related words. In this method the learners are exposed to many words at a time. They also get a clear idea of every word. They also learn the synonym, antonym and related words at the same time. This will help them to use the words learnt in their daily communication.

Film projectors

It is a machine which helps us to project films, pictures, etc, on a large size. It easily attracts the attention of the students. This can be used even in a highly populated classroom. It provides an aesthetic experience.

Advantages of using visuals in teaching

Using visuals inside the classroom for teaching provides a new atmosphere for the students. It kindles so much if interest within them. Using visual aids in classroom is more effective than the traditional teaching method. It also reduces the burden of the teacher. Using visual aids is very much helpful for large classes. Visuals easily grasp the attention of the students. Sometimes the voice of the teacher might not be audible to the students in a large classroom, this problem is also solved using this visual aids.

Motivation and interest play a very vital role in learning. Stephen krashen suggests that when motivation factor is high, people learn more. Visual aids motivate students. Thus, learning takes place much better when compared to the traditional teaching method.

Words learnt in this method stays in mind for a longer period of time. In traditional teaching method students tend to memorize words. Words that are memorized vanish easily. Thus using visuals will be an effective way to build vocabulary.

CONCLUSION

A picture is worth a thousand words. The practice of teaching vocabulary words, paired with visuals would help students to learn better. For many students teaching visually is more effective and engaging. Kemp and Dayton claim that “visuals aid in motivation and maintaining attention by adding variety and making the lesson more interesting.” Thus using visuals to teach vocabulary will be one of the easiest and an interesting way.

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