INNOVATIVE CLASSROOM TECHNIQUES OF TEACHING SPECIALIZED VOCABULARY AT THE INTERMEDIATE LEVEL

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Lucrarea de faţă explorează diverse tehnici şi metode de predare a vocabularului specializat, utilizate în predarea limbii engleze de către profesorii de limba engleză. Dacă în mod tradiţional limba engleză punea accent pe studierea amănunţită a regulilor gramaticale, în defavoarea vocabularului, o dată cu folosirea tot mai frecventă a metodelor bazate pe comunicare, studierea vocabularului şi-a recăpătat locul bine meritat. Articolul de faţă analizează rolul pe care îl are vocabularul în învăţarea limbii engleze de specialitate. Principalele idei ale articolului se referă la importanţa pe care o are acesta în cunoaşterea unei limbi străine şi descrie tehnici care pot face predarea atractivă şi eficientă pentru studenţi. Prin urmare, necesitatea de a preda în mod eficient vocabularul specializat, este provocarea de bază pentru majoritatea profesorilor de limbi străine.

Key words: techniques, vocabulary, communication, lexicology

Changes are quick and inevitable. The need to teach in general and teach to English language effectively in particular is the challenge before all the modern teachers. Today, it has become mandatory for the academicians to rethink and revamp their teaching strategies with the changing times. Since there has been a constant change in the teaching methods and techniques all over the world in every subject, vocabulary teaching methods and techniques need desirable and radical changes in a view of the demanding job market in the globalized world.

Foreign language teachers who are involved in teaching language for specific purposes are increasingly aware of the need to expand students' inventory of specialized vocabulary. The geopolitical processes that have been taking place in the world over the last several decades have undoubtedly shaped a new world reality and changed the perspective of professionals in their fields. Having transitioned into a market economy, the Moldovan economy has created a demand for a new type of a professional, who not only needs extensive knowledge in the content area but also must be able to communicate with professionals from various countries. Because English is often chosen as a lingua franca for professional symposia and conferences, many universities in the Republic of Moldova have introduced language for specific purposes courses that help students increase their English proficiency in content-specific areas. Since there has been a constant change in the teaching methods and techniques all over the world in every subject, vocabulary teaching methods and techniques need desirable and radical changes in a view of the demanding job market in the globalized world.

Vocabulary of a language is just like bricks for constructing a building. Like bricks, they are vital for the building of a language. Language is made up of words. If we want to use language effectively, we must have good stock of vocabulary. We cannot use the language, if we don't know the words of that language. English language has vast vocabulary. It is the richest language of the world. One cannot learn a language without learning vocabulary. Therefore, the study of vocabulary has occupied the central place in teaching-learning activities.

Nation opines that : "*If you spend most of your time studying grammar, your English will not improve very much. You will see most improvement, if you learn more words and expressions. You can say very little with grammar, but you can say almost anything with words."*[3]

This speaks volumes about the significance of vocabulary in learning, developing and enriching English. Even, West rightly says, *"Without grammar very little can be conveyed….but without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed".* [5]

Vocabulary is a very important means to express our thoughts and feeling, either in spoken or written form. Indeed, neither literature nor language exists without vocabulary. Allen states that: *"words are the bricks the bricks with which the poetry and the literature of the world have been built".* [1]

It is mainly through using words that we compose and express our thoughts to others. We can tackle our own task through words. It shows words are powerful tools. Famous imperialist poet, Rudyard Kipling says that:*"words are the most powerful drug used by mankind".* Those who are rich in vocabulary can speak and write English correctly. Therefore, the study of vocabulary is at the center while learning a new language. English being a second language or foreign language, one needs to learn vocabulary in the systematic way. In fact, without vocabulary communication in a second or foreign language is not possible in a meaningful way. McCarthy argues: *"No matter how well the student learns grammar, no matter how successfully the sounds of language are mastered, without words to express a wide range of meanings, communication in language just cannot happen in any meaningful way".* [2]

Nowadays methodologists and linguists suggest that teachers can decide and select the words to be taught on the basis of how frequently they are used by speakers of the language.

McCarthy rightly points out, *"Knowing a word involves knowing its spoken and written context of use; its patterns with words of related meaning as well as with its collocation partners; its syntactic, pragmatic and discourse patterns. It means knowing it actively and productively as well as receptively".* [2]

Richards [4] lists the different things students need to know about a word before we can say that they have taught it. These include:

1. The meaning(s) of the word;
2. Its spoken and written forms;
3. What "word parts" it has (e.g., any prefix, suffix, and "root" form);
4. Its grammatical behavior (e.g., its word class, typical grammatical patterns it occurs in);
5. Its collocations;
6. Its register;
7. What associations it has (e.g., words that are similar or opposite in meaning);
8. What connotations it has;
9. Its frequency.

Different types of instructional modes, approaches, vocabulary building activities and skills proved to be effective in developing children and university students' vocabulary in learning a foreign language environments. Teaching specialized vocabulary in context, combining vocabulary with reading and writing activities, and providing the students with different lexical information about the words under study enhanced children and adult students' vocabulary.

The prominent role of vocabulary knowledge in second or foreign language learning has been recently recognized by the theorist and researched in the field. Accordingly, numerous types of approaches, techniques, exercises and practice to teach vocabulary. Nation properly states that teaching vocabulary should not only consist of teaching specific words but also aims at equipping learners with strategies necessary to expand their specialized vocabulary knowledge. Below we will present some useful classroom techniques in teaching specialized vocabulary:

- ***Showing actual objects and showing models:***

It is a very useful technique to teach specialized vocabulary to the intermediate students. The names of many things can be taught by showing actual objects. It gives real experience and sense to the learners. Real objects or models of real objects are very effective and meaningful in showing meanings but in handling of real objects, a teacher must be practical and should not be superfluous. It is neither possible nor necessary to bring all the things in the classroom. Therefore, some words are to be taught by showing models. They are easily available in the

market. They are inexpensive too. Hence, teacher should make frequent use of such models to teach vocabulary.

- ***Using demonstrations and showing pictures:***

Teacher can perform some words. It can be fun and frolic. It makes the class student-centered. Teacher can act and learners try to imitate it. For example, the words like jump, smile, cry, nap, sleep, and dance can be demonstrated. Miming works well with younger students. You can mime out emotions and everyday activities to teach new words. This method can be practiced at ease. It can win the favour of the students as learners like dramatizations and can easily learn through them. Many situations can be dramatized or demonstrated. This works well with young students or students studying a foreign language to help introduce them to new concepts. After explaining new vocabulary, you can then ask the students to perform the actions.

Charts, pictures and maps can be used to develop students' understanding of a particular concept or word. There are some good picture dictionaries available in the market. Teacher should make use of such dictionaries.

- ***Teaching words in the context:***

Most people agree that vocabulary ought to be taught in context. Words taught in isolation are generally not retained. In addition, in order to grasp the full meaning of a word or phrase, students must be aware of the linguistic environment in which the word or phrase appears. Setting a good context which is interesting, plausible, vivid and has relevance to the lives of the learners, is an essential prerequisite for vocabulary teaching as it helps in both engaging the attention of the learners and naturally generating the target vocabulary. Maintaining the context and making sure the language surrounding the context is easy to comprehend, the teacher should start eliciting the target vocabulary.

- ***Etymology:***

Every word has its origin and its story of how it gets its current meanings. Because of its physical and meaningful origin, the etymology of a word is often found much easier to be comprehended than the bare linguistic symbol and its present semantic meanings. So, whenever we teach an English word that is completely strange, we can ask students to look it up in a specialized dictionary or other reference books, and or surf on the internet to find its origin. The interesting stories behind a word's birth can be a very good reminder for students to remember the particular word. Thus, learning the etymology of a word will certainly promote students' comprehension of new words.

- ***By drawing pictures:***

It is an easy and quick technique of introducing vocabulary to the learners. For students, drawing can be a fun medium to explain vocabulary. It is not necessary that teacher must be an expert in drawing pictures accurately. He can draw rough sketches to make an idea clear. Basic sketches will often work well. You can even have students do their own drawings, which further reinforces their understanding of the vocabulary. Comparative words and prepositions can be made clear by simple sketches. Pictures of many types and colours can be used successfully to show the meaning of words and sentence. Drawings can be used to explain the meaning of things, actions, qualities, and relations.

- ***Associated vocabulary:***

If one topic consists of number of words, it is easy to teach these entire words altogether. For example, it is easier to teach words like *orange, banana, grapes, lemon, pineapple, mango,* and *watermelon* together in the context of *"*fruits*",* than to teach anyone of these words in isolation.

- ***Synonyms:***

A synonym may be used to help the student to understand the different shades of meaning, if the synonym is better known than the word being taught. Synonyms help to enrich a student's vocabulary bank and provide alternative words instantly. These can be effective since they build on words and phrases that students already recognize. Adjectives often have several symptoms, and phrasal verbs will usually have a non-phrasal verb equivalent. Use caution that

you do imply that all the words have exactly the same meaning, since different words often are used for different connotations or to imply different meanings. The same procedure can be used to elicit synonyms. The teacher needs to highlight the fact that "true" synonyms are relatively rare and the answers will often be "near" synonyms. The students could make crosswords, word snakes or other puzzles for each other using these synonyms.

- ***Word Map:***

The teacher should ask students work in small groups to learn connections among words by brainstorming and organizing words according to a map that they design or a blank one that is provided by the teacher. An example might be a key-concept word in the center of the page with rays connecting related words. For example, when asked to give words they thought of when they heard the word "faithfulness", intermediate ESL students generated sixteen words or phrases: cat, friend, family, reliance, trust, dishonest, unfaithfulness, believe in friendships, bonds, obey, dog, friendly, sexual unfaithful, gossiping, marriage, love. After clustering words which they felt went together, they mapped the relationships between these words.

- ***Role play:***

Role-play is to create the presence of a real life situation in the classroom. It is important in the classroom communication because it gives students an opportunity to practice communicatively in different social contexts and in different social roles. The language applied in this activity is varied according to the student's status, attitudes, mood, and different situations.

- ***Use video to produce target vocabulary:***

Select a video segment that contains a series of actions or visual detail. Provide the learners with a list of target vocabulary words and ask them to construct a paragraph that incorporates as many of the words as possible. This activity is best done after the learners have seen the video. As they learn how to use more vocabulary properly, you will see an improvement in their writing and speaking. Teacher can also show a short film without sound and asking pupils to discuss what dialogue they would expect to hear. Showing a scene from a film without sound and asking pupils to use the facial expression to determine emotion.

CONCLUSION:

In sum, there are countless additional strategies that teachers can employ to assist students in building their specialized vocabularies. However, it is essential to keep in mind that promoting extensive reading, carefully selecting which words to teach quickly and which to teach extensively, and choosing strategies that help students make cognitive connections between the new and the known are at the heart of effective vocabulary building. There is no sure fire remedy or method to enhance vocabulary in a day or two. A student's vocabulary bank can be enriched on a gradual basis and one should always show keen interest and enthusiasm in finding, learning and understanding new words. Teaching specialized vocabulary at the intermediate level, through incidental, intentional, and independent approaches requires teachers to plan a wide variety of activities and exercises.

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