



TEACHING AND LEARNING WAYS OF VOCABULARY

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Annotation

In teaching and learning vocabulary, it is essential to distinguish between different types of vocabulary because varying types of vocabulary need different focus and treatment. Depending on the learners' aims and course content some types of vocabulary will be given priority and more emphasis in teaching and learning than others. This article will explore the varying sub-types of vocabulary.

Keywords: vocabulary, learning, teaching, teaching vocabulary, assessing vocabulary.

Spoken and Written Vocabulary

Although most of the existing literature on vocabulary has grown out of the study of written texts, recent corpus-based investigations of written and spoken vocabulary have enabled us to comparatively study spoken and written vocabulary in actual use. They reveal the difference between the vocabulary of written texts and the vocabulary of everyday spoken language. According to Cambridge International Corpus (CIC), the written data is mainly made up of lexical/ , non-lexical words, i.e., non-content items, including pronouns, prepositions and conjunctions, while the spoken list seems to embrace some lexical words like know, think, well, get and right. In spoken CIC data, spoken texts are less dense than most language-in-action dialogue texts with repetition and lexical negotiation occurring much more often in spoken discourse than in written texts. Spoken texts tend to be vague and general words are more frequently used in everyday speech than in written texts. These differences are significant when we consider what kinds of vocabulary items are important to teach in both writing and speech. From the comparative study, we can deduce that spoken language is the central source of the contact to communicative language but written language continues to be a fundamental source for input .Core and Non-core vocabulary. As the word 'core' suggests, core vocabulary refers to those words that occur frequently and are more central to the language than other words. According to McCarthy (1990), people favor using such words because they have core meaning-potential. These words are thought to be 'core' because they are easy to find an antonym for. In addition, they are neutral in formality and usable in a wide variety of





situations. Furthermore, these core words can be used to paraphrase or give definitions of other words. For example, in Task, the following instruction is given: “Decide which is the core word in the set of words: slim, slender, thin, emaciated, and scrawny”. Given the characteristics of a ‘core’ word, we can easily see that ‘thin’ is the core word. In ESP teaching, we also come across subject-specific vocabulary, which is non-core as far as the language as a whole is concerned. Carter determined that subject-specific vocabulary should be considered non-core because of its lack of neutrality and association with a specialized topic. Learners with specific or academic purposes may need to acquire them in medical texts and lessons may need to learn subject-specific core vocabulary, e.g., placebo and dialysis. However, other learners unrelated to the specific field may not necessarily need to learn these words. Discourse Structuring Vocabulary and Procedural Vocabulary. The English language possesses a number of abstract nouns that have little independent lexical content, such as assumption, variety, solution, proposal and factor. Their main function is to structure discourse, that is, to summarize or encapsulate previously mentioned ideas and link one sentence to the next. These abstract nouns are also called ‘anaphoric’ nouns and belong to discourse structuring vocabulary. They are quite commonly used in expository academic prose and in newspaper articles. Therefore, it is important and necessary for second language learners, particularly those who learn English for academic purposes to be familiar with these words. Procedural vocabulary is characteristically used to explain and make sense of more complicated words, paraphrase them, define them and organize them during communication. They are commonly used in dictionaries to give definitions so learners may find them useful when learning other words when building their vocabulary. Technical, Semi-Technical and General Vocabulary.

In terms of teaching vocabulary in ESP contexts, it is important to make a distinction between two categories of vocabulary: technical and semi-technical because they are of great importance to learners studying English for specific and academic purposes. Dudley-Evans and St John (1998:83) suggest resolving overlapping categories into two broader groupings: a). vocabulary that is used in general language but has a higher frequency of occurrence in specific and technical descriptions and discussions. b). vocabulary that has specialized and restricted meanings in certain disciplines and which may vary in meaning across disciplines. The first group should be referred to as semi-technical vocabulary and the second area would be regarded as technical vocabulary. We can examine the following text about a pharmaceutical experiment to illustrate the difference between the two:





We report a double blind, placebo controlled, crossover trial of an angiotensin converting enzyme inhibitor, anal April, in patients with chronic fluid overload receiving dialysis. We used a crossover study and carried out procedures within the study according to the standard of ethics committee of this hospital, each patient was given either anal April or placebo in the first period of treatment and the vocabulary treatment in the second

period; the order in which treatment was given was randomized, 13 patients receiving anal April and 12 placebos first. Randomization was carried out by suppliers of the drug. The technical vocabulary items are as follows: angiotensin, enzyme, inhibitor, anal April, chronic, dialysis, and placebo. The semi-technical vocabulary items are as follows: report, double blind, control, crossover, trial, convert, fluid, overload, receive, study, carryout, procedure, standard period treatment, randomize, randomization, supplier and drug. Academic Vocabulary So far, there have been several studies that have investigated the vocabulary that learners need for academic study. The most widely used and recognized one is the Academic Word List, which was compiled from a corpus of 3.5 million running words of the written academic text by examining the range of frequency of words outside the first 2000 most frequent words of English, as described in the General Service List (GSL) by West (1953). It contains 570 word families that occur frequently in a wide range of academic texts and from a wide range of disciplines, which means that the words are useful for learners studying humanities, law, science, and commerce. A number beside each word indicates which sub-list it appears in, making it convenient for both teachers and students to use. Which Vocabulary Types Should ESP Instructors Teach? According to Hutchinson and Waters, (1987) ESP should be seen as an approach to language teaching directed by specific and apparent reasons for learning. Nowadays, many second language learners attending UK or US universities learn English not only for general purposes but for more specific uses. Students who want to study at a university in an English-speaking country will be learning English for academic purposes and their academic study will usually involve specialized areas across different disciplines in physical sciences as well as in social sciences. The aim of their vocabulary acquisition will be to build academic vocabulary. Rationale for Learning Academic Vocabulary Learners who will attend an academic study program in English must focus on academic vocabulary which is variously known as 'general useful scientific vocabulary' cited in Nation (2001) and 'semi-technical vocabulary', because they need to exhibit a wide range of academic skills like reading research in a specific academic field, listening to teacher's lecture, writing academic papers and discussing or presenting their own ideas or research. With its importance, both academic vocabulary and semi-technical





vocabulary should be given priority in teaching by ESP teachers because, according to Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998: 83), this type of vocabulary is used in general life contexts but also has a higher frequency of occurrence in scientific and technical descriptions and discussions. Examination of the above given text shows that a potential ESP teacher must teach learners general vocabulary that has a higher frequency in a scientific field such as: Academic: trial, study, standard, ethics, period and order Medicine: overload, procedure, chronic, treatment, fluid and drug Verbs: report, control, convert, receive, give, and randomize Collocations: carry out

Teaching Technical Vocabulary

Some EFL and ESL teachers may sometimes assert that it is not their responsibility to teach technical vocabulary.

This may also apply to ESP teachers who may or may not have the technical expertise in the subject matter they are teaching. However, under certain circumstances, and as the only qualified instructor, it may be the duty of an ESP teacher to teach technical vocabulary to assist in the learner's process of acquisition.

What is Beyond the Duty of the ESP Teacher?

To what extent does an ESP teacher need to incorporate technical vocabulary into a syllabus or lesson? A technical word is one that is recognizably specific to a particular topic, field or discipline. It is likely that they can only be fully learned and understood by studying the field. Such words are usually considered to be the responsibility of subject teachers. In

some cases, although learners who are in a specific scientific field will have no problem with technical words, a language teacher may in fact, have great difficulty with them. We can imagine the examples in the given text. Technical words like enzyme, dialysis and placebo are specialized words in the field of medicine, which are quite easy for a student studying medicine. Additionally, there are technical words that are quite familiar to learners (even if learners are not studying the specific discipline to which the technical words belong) because the words are widely, even internationally, known. Some commonly occurring words in computer science, such as browser, program, log, hypertext and Internet, are quite familiar to learners. However, terminology such as anal April or angiotensin can be beyond the ESP teacher. When dealing with technical words, the teacher will need to consider whether to integrate or skip these words depending on the needs and aims of the learners.





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