

IMPORTANCE OF VOCABULARY IN LANGUAGE LEARNING FOR THE 1ST YEAR STUDENTS

Mamatqulova N.F1., Muzafarova F.R1.

1 Uzbekistan State World Languages University

Annotation

This article discusses the critical role of vocabulary in language learning, particularly for first-year students. It highlights the evolution of vocabulary teaching approaches from traditional methods to more communicative and competency-based strategies. The authors emphasize that vocabulary acquisition is essential for effective communication in a foreign language and that a limited vocabulary can impede language proficiency. The article also addresses the challenges educators face in teaching vocabulary and the importance of tailored strategies to enhance vocabulary learning among students.

Key words: vocabulary, language learning, communicative approach, vocabulary acquisition, teaching strategies, second language proficiency
Vocabulary has always been considered an essential component when learning a foreign language. But in the 70s and 80s, due to the introduction of a communicative approach to teaching foreign languages, the attitude towards the study of vocabulary changed.

Vocabulary control was previously carried out using various tests that measured students' knowledge of commonly used, specialized and especially academic vocabulary. There were different types of tests. But, unfortunately, the tests did not correspond to the communicative approach to learning a foreign language. Testing has not kept pace with the changing view of the role of vocabulary in communicative activity. The emphasis was mainly on knowledge of individual words. Knowledge of individual words, of course, is a key element, but with a communicative approach it is important: first, the ability to produce these words in speech during the communication process, second, it is necessary to know not only individual isolated words, but also

phrases, and sometimes it is useful to memorize entire blocks, where individual units of vocabulary form a single whole.

However, already in the 90s, many studies appeared on this topic. Now, with the introduction of the competency-based approach, interest and attention to the study of vocabulary acquisition and control of vocabulary, especially specialized vocabulary, is an important problem.

For a large majority of learners, the ultimate goal of studying is to be able to communicate in a new language. If learners do not wish to lean completely on non-verbal skills, mastering vocabulary is not just important, but crucial in a foreign language learning. Vocabulary is learned through focused, conscious study, but even more commonly in an indirect manner through listening and reading, using context clues to figure out the meaning. However, this kind of incidental learning is only possible if the amount of unknown words remains low. That is, learners must have a significant vocabulary to be able to learn new words from the context in which they appear.

Vocabulary knowledge is often viewed as a critical tool for second language learners because a limited vocabulary in a second language impedes successful communication. Underscoring the importance of vocabulary acquisition, Schmitt emphasizes that “lexical knowledge is central to communicative competence and to the acquisition of a second language”. [1] Nation further describes the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and language use as complementary: knowledge of vocabulary enables language use and, conversely, language use leads to an increase in vocabulary knowledge. [2] The importance of vocabulary is demonstrated daily use. In classroom, the achieving students possess the most sufficient vocabulary. Researchers have realized that the acquisition of vocabulary is essential for successful second language use and plays an important role in the formation of complete spoken and written texts. In English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language

(EFL) learning vocabulary items plays a vital role in all language skills (i.e. listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Research has shown that second language readers rely heavily on vocabulary knowledge and the lack of that knowledge is the main and the largest obstacle for L2 readers to overcome. Many researchers argue that vocabulary is one of the most important-if not the most important- components in learning a foreign language, and foreign language curricula must reflect this. Meara states many reasons for devoting attention to vocabulary. “First, a large vocabulary is of course essential for mastery of a language. Second language acquirers know this; they carry dictionaries with them, not grammar books, and regularly report that the lack of vocabulary is a major problem”. On the other hand, vocabulary has been acknowledged as L2 learners’ greatest single source of problems. This remark may possibly reflect that the open-endedness of a vocabulary system is perceived to be a cause of difficulty by learners. [3]

Another possible reason is that, unlike syntax and phonology, vocabulary does not have ruled the learners may follow to acquire and develop their knowledge. In other words, it is not clear in L2 vocabulary learning what rules apply or which vocabulary items should be learned first. Oxford also claims that vocabulary is “by far the most sizeable and unmanageable component in the learning of any language, whether a foreign or one’s mother tongue, because of tens of thousands of different meanings”[4] Despite these difficulties that language learners face in L2 vocabulary, they still have to deal with it in their examinations as “vocabulary has traditionally been one of the language components measured in language tests” claims Schmitt. [5] Furthermore, many learners see second language acquisition (SLA) as essentially a matter of learning vocabulary and therefore they spend a great deal of time on memorizing lists of L2 words and rely on their bilingual dictionary as a basic communicative resource. As a result, language teachers and applied linguists now generally recognize the

importance of vocabulary learning and are exploring ways of promoting it more effectively. Some of this research takes the form of investigation of strategies learners use specifically for vocabulary (VLS), which is our focus of attention.

Recent research indicates that teaching vocabulary may be problematic because many teachers are not confident about the best practice in vocabulary teaching and at times do not know where to begin to form an instructional emphasis on word learning. “Teaching words is a crucial aspect in learning a language as languages are based on words” thinks Thornberry.[6] It is almost impossible to learn a language without words; even communication between human beings is based on words. “Both teachers and students agree that acquisition of the vocabulary is a central factor in teaching a language” states Walters.[7] Teaching vocabulary is one of the most discussed parts of teaching English as a foreign language. When the teaching and learning process takes place, problems would appear to the teachers. They have problems of how to teach students in order to gain satisfying results. The teacher should prepare and find out the appropriate techniques, which will be implemented to the students. A good teacher should prepare himself or herself with various and up-to-date techniques. Teachers need to be able to master the material in order to be understood by students, and make them interested and happy in the teaching and learning process in the classroom. The teachers should be concerned that teaching vocabulary is something new and different from student’s native language. They also have to take into account that teaching English for young learners is different from adults. The teachers have to know the characteristics of his\her learners. They moreover need to prepare good techniques and suitable material in order to gain the target of language teaching.

The main goal of the latest curricula is to contribute to the development of students' language competence. Learning English should include helping students 1) develop a certain level of linguistic competence and the ability to

use language in real communication 2) mastery of certain basic language knowledge; 3) mastering the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. In carrying out these tasks, the teacher must help students understand some effective ways to master the English language.

In the process of teaching and learning English, teaching and learning the lexical side of the language is a very important part. According to Harmer, “if the structure of the language makes up the skeleton of the language, then the vocabulary is the vital organs and flesh. The ability to manipulate grammatical structure has no potential value if words are not used”. [8]

Vocabulary is central to language and is very important for language learners. Some second language researchers illustrate this point as follows: “You cannot speak, understand, read and write in a foreign language without knowing the necessary set of words. Therefore, vocabulary is the basis of mastering a foreign language “... vocabulary is necessary at every stage of language learning”.

Only when students have sufficient vocabulary they develop the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Thus, when learning English, vocabulary is considered as the basis for language acquisition. The fact that first-year students possess limited English vocabulary leads to difficulties in the process of studying English. Teachers have to design special tasks intended for learning basic words in combination with developing vocabulary. The main reason why students need to speak foreign languages is the ability to access scientific knowledge as well as the opportunity to communicate professionally. In the future, they will not only have to study specialized literature, but also take part in international conferences and various discussions. Thus, at the university we not only continue with students the study of a foreign language that began at school, but gradually raise them to a new level of foreign language proficiency, which implies ability to communicate with colleagues. However, teachers are constantly faced with the fact that yesterday's schoolchildren have very poor training in a foreign

language, the main disadvantage of which is an extremely limited vocabulary. In English, the same word often has many different meanings. For example, the English words ill, pain, cure, treat, heart, gall, head, management, like many other words, have several meanings, both in the national language and in the professional language. The conclusion follows from this: to expand the vocabulary of young people, it is useful to memorize not only a lot of words, but also as many meanings of the same word as possible. Then it will be easier for students to translate phrases such as attending doctor, bad headache, drug administration, pain management, etc.

REFERENCES

Schmitt, N. "Vocabulary in Language Teaching", Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, (2000)

Nation, I.S.P, "Learning Vocabulary in another Language". Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, (2001)

Meara, P. (1980). "Vocabulary Acquisition": A neglected aspect of language learning. Language teaching and Linguistics Abstracts, 13, pp 221-246

Oxford, R.L.(1990). Language Learning Strategies. What every teacher should know. Boston: Heinle and 323 Heinle.

Schmitt, N. (1999). The relation between TOEFL vocabulary items and meaning, association, 325 collocation, and word-class knowledge. Language Testing 16, 189-216

Thornbury, S. "How to Teach Vocabulary". England: Pearson Education Limited. Ur press, (2002)

Walters, J.M. (2004) "Teaching the use of context to infer meaning: A longitudinal survey of L1 and L2 vocabulary research". Language Teaching, 37(4), pp.243-252

Jeremy, Harmer, The Practice of English Language Teaching. Longman, 1991.