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Some Modern Methods of Teaching English Vocabulary

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Abstract

This article discusses some modern methods for teaching English vocabulary to middle school students. The importance of a close connection between lexical and grammatical tasks is emphasized.

Key Words: *receptive and productive tasks, completion or creation of sentences and texts, selecting, matching, narrative, role-plays, language skills.*

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Experienced ESP teachers know how important vocabulary is. Students must learn thousands of words that native English speakers use. Unfortunately, language teacher preparation programs for many years have placed little emphasis on methods to help students learn vocabulary. However, today this problem is becoming more and more relevant as more and more students including middle school students realize that communication stops when they lack the necessary words. There is no contradiction between learning the most important words and developing a solid understanding of grammar, so neither grammar nor vocabulary should be neglected in the classroom. It is well known that the introduction of new language subjects should be immediately followed by practice. New knowledge must be integrated into existing knowledge, i.e. into the learner's existing network of word associations, the so-called mental lexicon. [3].

A teacher can use many different types of activities to help students commit new words to long term memory. Such tasks are either receptive tasks, which require students to make judgments about words but not necessarily produce them, or productive tasks, which require students to integrate newly learned words into an oral or written activity. Certainly, this classification is somewhat vague, since receptive tasks can become productive when students are asked to make their judgments. Tasks in which students make decisions about words can therefore be divided into the following types: > 1)

Word identification is simple and means that they are present where they can be "hidden" in the text, e.g. Students can be asked to count the number of times a word appears in the text, find all phrasal verbs, or underline words and phrases in the text that convey the entire idea of the article, etc.[4].

Then students can be asked to read the text, turn it over and answer if the given words occurred in the text. Identification is also the process students apply in task in which they have to unscramble anagrams, such as *saoqtu* – *quotas* etc. But it should be mentioned that for intermediate level students such kind of identifying should include more grammatically-oriented exercises, e.g. tasks where students are asked to underline the correct part of speech for each word as it is used in the text which precedes the exercise [5];

2) Selecting tasks are cognitively more complex than identifying tasks since they involve both recognizing words and making choice among them. This may take the form of choosing the "odd one out" task, which provides students with the set of words and phrases related to each other and belonging to the same lexical row, and the learners are proposed to find the word which doesn't correspond to the row in each set. Such kind of activity not necessarily has a written answer. More important is that learners are able to prove their opinions and justify their choice selecting those answers, which are suitable for them among the suggested opinions;

3) Matching involves first recognizing words and then matching

them, for example: a visual representative task, in which students are offered to match words with the illustration offered; finding a synonym; selecting an antonym; choosing a definition; forming a collocation, a task in which students are proposed to match nouns with verbs as they are used in the text or combine words to form word partnerships.

4) Sorting activities require students to sort words into different categories. These categories can be either given or guessed, e.g. an exercise where the given terms, phrases or words should be classified into groups according to various criteria and functions;

5) Ranking and sequencing require students to put words into some kind of order. This involves arranging words on a cline, for example, adverbs of frequency. Learners may be encouraged to express their opinions and rank the given items according to their preference. In such kind of tasks, there may be no right answer, but the exercise of making the choices and comparing them with a classmate's choices is a good "brain work".

Productive tasks are of two main types:

1) Completion – of sentences and texts. These task types are more famous as gap-fills. There are two main formats of gap-fills – open and closed. In open type, students have to fill gaps using mental lexicon and some clues like the first letters or definitions given in the brackets. In closed gap-fills, the words are provided in the form of the list at the beginning of the exercise [3]. Besides, students can complete sentences and text using very popular

multiple-choice tasks in which learners are offered to find the correct answer among a number of the suggested options [1];

2) Creation – of sentences and texts. In comparison to completion tasks in which students simply have to slot the right word in, sentence and text creation tasks require to create the context for given words, to use notes, phrases and words given in an exercise as a help to draw up the whole text. Here are some typical task instructions: - use each of these to make a sentence, which clearly shows the meaning of the word; - write a short narrative (or a dialogue) which includes at least five words from the list. Such tasks often lead to speaking activities, either reading aloud or performing a dialogue to the class or comparing and explaining sentences in pairs or small groups.

While learning vocabulary game is a special helper in the process of integrating new words as well. Game factor can make words more memorable and help to involve every student into the class work. Most games offered by the authors of the modern textbooks are role-plays; mainly pair work [2]. They are not precisely vocabulary games but give an opportunity to practice speaking skills based on the vocabulary learned while working through the unit. These tasks are based on realistic problems or situations and are designed to motivate learners, develop their skills working in teams, delegating and interacting effectively with each other.

All these activities give students possibility to practice their communication and language skills in

order to develop fluency in speech and put professional vocabulary to practice. They make work non-routine

and keep learners being interested and active during the whole class.

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