

Journal of Language Pedagogy and
Innovative Applied Linguistics
November 2023, Volume 1, No. 4, pp: 132-137
ISSN: 2995-6854
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Mastering Antonyms: Innovative Approaches for Enhancing Vocabulary in Schools

Shekhroz Akhtamov *

*Teachers of English at the Chair of English Language and Literature, Samarkand State Institute of
Foreign Languages, Uzbekistan*

Abstract

This article illustrates some effective ways of teaching antonyms at schools. It is known that educators and teachers use innovative and quite interesting methods in teaching antonyms at schools currently. It is said that improvement of a foreign language is not possible without enhancing vocabulary as it is the foundation stone of any language and antonyms are considered the most important part of vocabulary. In the article there are given instructions of some effective ways that can be used in classes in order to teach antonyms.

Key Words: *vocabulary, antonyms, independent student activities, teaching opposites. repetition, retrieval, imaging, mnemonics, motivation.*

Paper/Article Info

Reference to this paper should be made as follows:

Akhtamov, S. (2023). Mastering Antonyms: Innovative Approaches for Enhancing Vocabulary in Schools. Journal of Language Pedagogy and Innovative Applied Linguistics, 1(4), 132-137.
<https://doi.org/10.1997/tykdde60>

* Corresponding Author

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1997/tykdde60>



The Antonyms form an integral part of the English Language. Acquaintance with the vocabulary of the English language is a necessity for effective expression either in the written or the oral form. It is proved by many scholars that antonyms are the negative connotations of a particular word. So, it is a word or phrase that is opposite in meaning to a particular word or phrase in the same language. When teaching such kind of opposite words to learners, teachers should combine traditional, modern, and interactive ways. If these methods are utilized equally for teaching antonyms, educators can obtain their intended results. Antonyms are opposites - they have opposite, or close to opposite meanings. It is noted that nowadays the most important thing in the teaching process is to attract learners' attention to the lesson, and to the topic through using different ways. For instance, the teacher can declare an official opposite day for the class when the theme will be antonyms. This way brings good results and it causes the lesson will be interesting and non-traditional for the class. Kids will actively get excited in advance and prepare for the day when everything they say is the opposite of their intended meaning. This activity has the benefit that it gives a huge amount of practice with antonyms without students knowing they are doing any work.

In the learning process, the role of independent student activities is worthy of giving attention. If we want to see the benefits of independent student activities in teaching antonyms, we realize that they can guide the discovery of new words.

Developing a student's vocabulary can be done by an introduction to synonyms and antonyms. Students can strengthen their reading comprehension skills and the size of their vocabulary through the use of both synonyms and antonyms. Activities to teach synonyms and antonyms at the middle school level focus on words students already know. Using contexts which are rich in synonyms and antonyms shows an increase in students' understanding and supplies with an opportunity for practice in replacing common words or matching synonyms with their antonyms. Teachers can take short stories that students enjoy and are familiar with and choose words that are commonly overused to highlight. Students replace the words with more creative synonyms to add variety to their vocabularies. Students may use a thesaurus or be required to think of words on their own. An alternative option for this lesson asks students to provide an antonym for the teacher's selected words. Creating a banned words List helps students to learn antonyms and synonyms. Teachers should create the first banned words list for students. After that students prepare themselves as teacher's list. They learn by heart antonyms according to the list and play different games connected with the list to learn antonyms.

In the era of technology, human beings are connected with ICT gadgets in any sphere of their life. When it is about learners they are addicted to the screens of their electronic devices. If learners want to search about antonyms on the Internet there are

good and bad word webs that suggest additional activities in expanding student use of the antonym words. Students can browse any word from different websites to develop alternatives to the overused "good" and "bad." The web differs from creating a master list of banned words in that it provides options for various circumstances. For example, one branch of the web might include alternatives for "bad" about a person while another branch of the web lists alternatives for references to the weather. A similar antonym activity can be created to give students an idea of words to express the opposite of a "nice" person.

It should be mentioned that using poems and puzzles in the lessons shows good results in teaching antonyms. Developing original poetry offers the opportunity to work on synonyms and antonyms such as in an acrostic (a poem in which particular letters in each line, usually the first letters, can be read downwards to form a word or words) or diamante poem, students may be asked to provide synonyms for a description of a single object. Or students may be asked to provide a comparison in description using antonyms. Similarly, students may write an acrostic poem finding synonyms for describing an overall topic for each letter in the poem. Teachers can also create word search puzzles that list clues to the words in the puzzle in the form of synonyms or antonyms.

According to instructor Jeremy Cook's lesson the pupils can learn about the different types of words that can be antonyms, and how to spot

antonyms in a text. Jeremy has been teaching in elementary education for 13 years and holds a master's degree in Education. He emphasized in his speech the question "What Are Antonyms?" like this: "If we lived in an opposite world, it would be kind of weird. Water would be dry and the sky would be down. Many things in our world have opposites. In grammar, we refer to direct opposites as antonyms, words that mean the opposite or reverse of each other. For instance, down is an antonym for up, and wet is an antonym for dry. Only certain words and concepts have opposites. The one part of speech that rarely has an antonym is the noun. Let's think of a noun. Take the word shark, for example. Can you think of the direct opposite of a shark? There is no antonym! So, which types of words can be antonyms? There's no strict answer to this question, but let's take a look at words that can typically have antonyms:

Adjectives Mostly, antonyms are adjectives, which are words that describe nouns. Let's look at some examples of adjective antonym pairs:

Light	⇒	Dark
Late	⇒	Early
Loud	⇒	Quiet
Big	⇒	Small
Tall	⇒	Short

Prepositions

Another type of word that can have an antonym is the preposition, which shows a relationship between words or location. Let's look at some examples of proposition antonym pairs:

In	⇒	Out
Up	⇒	Down
Back	⇒	Forth
Over	⇒	Under
Near	⇒	Far

Verbs

Verbs, which are action words, can also sometimes have antonyms. Let's look at some examples of verb antonym pairs:

Open	⇒	Close
Buy	⇒	Sell
Find	⇒	Lose
Come	⇒	Go
Begin	⇒	End

What about colors? When it comes to colors, there are only two words that make an antonym pair: black and white. These two colors are opposites because black is the absence of color while white is the presence of all colors. No other colors can be antonyms”.

Based on Jeremy Cook's research teachers should consider different ways of teaching antonyms according to the level of learners or students. If learners study at primary school they can learn opposite words through their background and visual aids used by teachers. However, educators cannot teach or cannot make learners remember antonyms by way of teaching parts of speech of antonyms. The reason is that their age does not suit them to acquire or catch such difficult materials.

It is necessary to understand the ways our memory works to help students to learn a new vocabulary more effectively. Thornbury refers to several principles we should follow in

the process of learning and remembering: repetition, retrieval, spacing, pacing, use, cognitive depth, personal organizing, imaging, mnemonics, motivation, and attention/arousal [10, 24-25]. There is a specific kind of repetition that is useful for remembering. The more often the word occurs within a study material the greater the chance it will be committed to memory. To be able to recall the word later it is worthwhile to retrieve it from memory, for example, to use it in written sentences. Spacing means to “distribute memory work across a period than to mass it together in a single block”. Pacing reflects the individual ability of each of the students to learn and remember. Well-known is the principle “use it or lose it” and if it is applied in any interesting way it will be stored in long-term memory. “The more decisions the learner makes about a word, and more cognitively demanding these decisions are, the better the word is remembered”, for example “to decide on its part of speech” or “to use it to complete a sentence”. This principle is called “cognitive depth”.

Imaging and as another way of remembering means to visualize “a mental picture” of a word preferably “self-generated not acquired the second hand”. “Tricks to help retrieve items or rules from memory” are known as mnemonics and they are “often visual”. “The only difference a strong motivation makes is that the learner is likely to spend more time on rehearsal and practice.” Arousal is a very high degree of attention” and it “seems to correlate with improved recall”. And “words that trigger a strong

emotional response are more easily recalled". In sum, learning vocabulary requires using various methods and those that include the principle of visualization or cognitive depth can be plentifully and satisfactorily supported by internet resources.

Thornbury [10, 26] mentions the rate of forgetting is high at the beginning but it eventually slows down. Two aspects influence retaining new words: easy-to-learn words are remembered longer and the principle of distributed practice, mentioned earlier as spacing. The second aspect applies the study of any material to be divided into smaller parts and learned "over spaced learning sessions." Spaced review of the learned material called "recycling" is also very effective and it eliminates forgetting to a minimum. In my point of view, as a teacher, everyone should learn every method first and then try it out on themselves. After getting some experience they can easily teach to their learners. Thornbury's principles in learning vocabulary, such as antonyms are essential. Because there is a place for each one in the remembering process according to the types of words. For instance, students cannot use one way of learning among the principles. When they are fed up with one method, they will not have the motivation or wish to learn new

vocabulary. Hence, teachers should be careful in using different methods, such as repetition, retrieval, spacing, pacing, use, cognitive depth, personal organizing, imaging, mnemonics, motivation, and attention/arousal in order not to make learners lazy and passive.

To sum up, according to research, there are several suggestions teachers should remember about vocabulary. Firstly, they need to be aware of different methods that are available for presenting and practicing vocabulary. In addition to this, it is worth changing these techniques. Secondly, when presenting new lexis, teachers should demonstrate new words in phrases, sentences, or in contexts rather than in single units. What is more, learners need to know not only the translation of a new vocabulary item but also its spelling, pronunciation, common collocations, context, and grammar should be mentioned as well. Thirdly, teachers should be more creative in their teaching and they should include word games and word game-like activities in the classroom, too. The last key thing to be worth remembering at this point is that learners need to be well informed about possible methods and techniques that may be helpful for their language learning, including good ways of recording vocabulary and working with dictionaries.

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