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THE ROLE OF VOCABULARY IN TEACHING PROCESSN. Sadieva¹, A.J. Karaeva²*Abstract*

The article deals with the role of vocabulary in the process of learning.

Key words: vocabulary, teaching process, Teaching English, listening and reading.

Teaching English vocabulary is an important area worthy of effort and investigation. Recently methodologists and linguists emphasize and recommend teaching vocabulary because of its importance in language teaching. Vocabulary is needed for expressing meaning and in using the receptive (listening and reading) and the productive (speaking and writing) skills. "If language structures make up the skeleton of language, then it is vocabulary that provides the vital organs and the flesh" (Harmer). Talking about the importance of vocabulary, the linguist David Wilkins argued that: "without grammar little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed." Indeed, people need to use words in order to express themselves in any language. Most learners, too, acknowledge the importance of vocabulary acquisition. In my experience as a teacher, I noticed the fact that students usually find it difficult to speak English fluently. They usually consider speaking and writing activities exhausting because they keep on using the same expressions and words and very soon their conversation is abruptly interrupted due to missing words. And the main reason for such communication problems is the lack of vocabulary. Other students are confronted with the problem of forgetting the words immediately after the teacher has elicited their meaning or after they have looked them in the dictionary, and this also a cause of the lack of vocabulary. The more words students learn, the easier they memorize them.

The teacher has an essential role in helping students to improve their vocabulary. Unfortunately, vocabulary teaching has not been enough responsive to such problems, and teachers have not recognized the tremendous importance of helping their students to develop an extensive vocabulary. If we look back in the past, we discover that for a long time, English used teaching approaches such as Direct Method and Audiolingualism which emphasized the primary importance of teaching grammatical structures. Since the accent was on grammar, few words were introduced in such courses and most often, they were limited and related to the grammar structures taught. By the beginning of 1970s, there was a major change in teaching English. The focus turned from the Direct Method and Audiolingualism to the Communicative Approach which emphasized the importance of teaching vocabulary. Students were exposed to diverse vocabulary and speaking activities. Many words began being introduced during such courses and students were encouraged to express themselves as much as possible. Nowadays, there is more freedom in choosing the methods to be used during English classes. The English syllabus is organized around both vocabulary and grammar structures. Since there is a certain number of classes allotted for each item in the syllabus, teachers usually have the necessary time to insist on teaching and practicing vocabulary. Vocabulary is no longer treated as an add-on and teachers become more aware of the importance of vocabulary and attention is paid to the grammar of words, to collocations and to word frequency. Nevertheless, students still have difficulties in expressing themselves fluently and still consider speaking tasks exhausting.

Vocabulary is not a syllabus, i.e., a list of words that teachers prepare for their learners to memorize and learn by heart. Memorizing may be good and useful as a temporary technique for tests, but not for learning a foreign language. Language students need to learn vocabulary of the target language in another way. If we are really to teach students what words mean and how they are used, we need to show them being used

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together in context. Words do not just exist on their own; they live together and they depend upon each other. Therefore, teaching vocabulary correctly is a very important element in language learning. Correct vocabulary instruction involves vocabulary selection, word knowledge and techniques. In the past, teachers used to select and present vocabulary from concrete to abstract. Words like 'door', 'window', 'desk', etc., which are concrete, used to be taught at beginning levels. However, words like 'honesty', 'beauty' etc., which are abstract words, used to be taught at advanced levels because they are not "physically represented" in the learning/teaching environment and are very difficult to explain.

In English, like in any other foreign language, some words are easier to learn than others. Easiest of all are the words more or less identical to the students' native language, like, for instance, the word "vocabulary." However, students might be trapped in their confidence with which they memorize such identical words, since English has a list of some problematic words, called "false friends". These false friends are words identical in form to certain Romanian words, but completely different in meaning. An example of this would be "sensible." While many students might confidently translate this word simply "sensible," they will be astonished to find out that, the Romanian equivalent for "sensible" is in fact "rational," while the English equivalent for "sensible" is "sensitive." This demonstrates the crucial importance of allotting a special lesson for these false friends and of encouraging students to practice them as often as possible. Another aspect that makes English vocabulary difficult is the pronunciation of certain words. Research shows that words that are difficult to pronounce are more difficult to learn. Many learners find that words with clusters of consonants such as "health" or "crisps" are problematic. Length or complexity of the words is another characteristic of the difficulty of English vocabulary. A long word will be more difficult to memorize than a short one. Also, variable stress of words such as "necessary" and "necessity" can add to their difficulty. The meaning of the words is another controversial feature of the English vocabulary. When two words overlap in meaning, students are likely to confuse them. An example in this case would be the difference between "make" and "do." These words have the same meaning, but are used in different expressions. You "make a decision", but you "do homework." Students might find the use of these two words confusing.

Concluding this article we came to decision that teaching vocabulary is a very important field, and it is more than just presenting and introducing new vocabulary to the learners. Knowing words is not filling papers with new words and memorizing them. The article suggests that what students need to understand is the word meaning in context and how words are used. This can be achieved, according to the article, through correct vocabulary instruction which should involve vocabulary selection, word knowledge and techniques. The article presents and describes these concepts and provides examples and techniques that illustrate how teachers can handle vocabulary teaching in an effective way.

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