

# An Investigation into Teaching and Learning Vocabulary Effectively

Dr. V. Govindha Rajulu<sup>1</sup>, S. Vijaya<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Associate Professor in English, Department of Humanities and Sciences, Kuppam Engineering College, Kuppam

<sup>2</sup>PGT in English, KGBV, Santhipuram

## Abstract

Vocabulary building plays a vital role both in speaking and writing effectively. The English language is said to have more than six lakhs of words. It may not possible to learn all these words. We select words depending on their frequency of occurrence, usefulness and range of their applicability. There is no one single way to learn vocabulary. There are several ways to enrich our vocabulary such as Newspapers, Magazines, Movies, Television, and Movies etc. Apart from this one should have to acquire the absolute knowledge of Synonyms, Antonyms, Affixation, One word substitutes, Words often confused, Phrasal verbs, Idioms, Classification of words, Conversion and Analogy which help English language learners in improving vocabulary.

## Introduction

English is a live and ever growing language. The proof that is very active to receive many numbers of new words in everyday across the world. There are many strategies to improve vocabulary, knowing some of the important vocabulary building strategies help us in enhancing our vocabulary. Vocabulary building is an effective unit of language and language is the vehicle for communication. Everyone knows that the frustration of not getting the right word for a given context. Sometimes it is a matter of not being able to recall the right vocabulary word.

It is important to have keener interest and eager to learn new words. One cannot say that knowing the spelling and meaning of words enough to enhance vocabulary unless one can confidently use it in a sentence. The reason, why most of the people cannot speak in English fluently even though they know its grammar is that they are unable to recall the appropriate words. Apart from this, lack of exposure is also one of the biggest handicaps in language learning. Exposure refers to the English speaking atmosphere around us.

English is a rich language. Vocabulary words are highly numerous in English. It is not possible to learn all these words but learners need to select appropriate words depending on their frequency of occurrence, usefulness and range of their applicability. There is no single way to learn vocabulary. There are number of sources to improve vocabulary such as Newspapers, Magazines, YouTube, Movies and television. In order to possess a good stock of vocabulary, it is necessary to pursue new vocabulary words actively and become aware of their meaning and usage. There are many ways to improve vocabulary such as synonyms, antonyms, homonyms, homophones, homographs, hypernym, hyponyms, affixation, one word substitutes, words often confused, phrasal verbs, idioms, proverbs, classification of

words, collocations, compound words, conversion and analogy which help English language learners in improving their vocabulary.

### **Characteristics of words**

Learners must know the characteristics of the words for effective learning of vocabulary which are as follows:

- 1) A word can have more than one meaning. Generally a word has these levels of meaning.
  - a) Lexical: The meaning which is given in the dictionary.
  - b) Syntactical: The meaning which is conveyed by the word order.
  - c) Morphological: The meaning which is conveyed through the forms of words.
  - d) International: The meaning which is conveyed by the way the word pronounced.
  - e) Cultural: The meaning which is related to culture.
- 2) Words convey their meaning in the context.
- 3) There are no exact synonyms with in a language.
- 4) Words change their meaning based on context and usage.

### **Kinds of words**

Words in English may be divided into different categories which are as follows:

#### **1. Functional or Structural words**

These are the words which provide grammatical links and modify the meaning of the sentence. Functional words are also called structural words that plays vital role in construction of sentences. function words are limited. These words are not modifying the parts of speech in a sentence. These words include prepositions, pronouns, helping verbs, articles etc.

#### **1. Content words**

The words which provide main meaning in a sentence is called content words. These are the actual root words of the language. All the content words are stressed. These words are numerous. Content words include Nouns, Adjectives, Verbs, Adverbs, Conjunctions, Interrogative pronouns and Demonstrative pronouns.

#### **2. Substitute words**

These are words which are used to substitute other words. For example I, he, she, they, we, anybody, everybody, none etc.

#### **3. Passive vocabulary or Recognition vocabulary**

The vocabulary which we understand the meaning when we are listening and reading is called passive vocabulary.

#### **4. Active vocabulary or Production vocabulary**

The vocabulary which we are using excessively in speaking and writing is called active vocabulary.

### **Principles of selecting vocabulary**

English is a rich language. Vocabulary words are highly numerous in English. It is not possible to learn all these words but learners need to select appropriate words depending on their frequency of occurrence, usefulness and range of their applicability. Learners should follow the following techniques while learning new vocabulary.

1. Word frequency
2. Structural consideration

3. Material association
4. Environmental applicability
5. Universality
6. Range of applicability
7. Words productivity

## **Different Forms of Vocabulary**

### **1. Synonyms**

Synonyms are the words having exactly or nearly same meaning or similar meaning. Synonym enriches our vocabulary and gives an opportunity to use an appropriate words in our communication. For an example, synonym for a word teacher is educator, trainer, instructor, master, tutor, coach mentor, advisor, guide etc.

### **2. Antonyms**

Antonyms are words that have opposite or contrary meaning. Apart from learning antonyms, it is necessary that one should know their appropriate usage of words otherwise the sentence may convey wrong meaning.

### **3. Affixation**

Affixation is the process by which an affix (Prefix or Suffix) is added to a root word. Affixes are set of letters or syllables that are added either before or end of the root word to frame new word. Affixes are basically divided into prefixes and suffixes.

### **4. Prefixes**

A prefix is a set of letters placed before root word. For example, the word ‘unhappy’ consists of the prefix ‘un’ which combined with the root word happy. The word unhappy means not happy.

### **5. Suffixes**

A suffix is a set of letters added at the end of a root word which makes a new word. The new word is most often a different word from the original word. Suffixes usually changes the parts of speech. For an example manage is a verb, management is a noun by adding the suffix ment to the root word manage.

### **6. One word substitute**

English has specific words to describe professions, traits of people, fears, emotions etcetera. By using one word substitutes, it is possible to express our views and opinions clearly without using lengthy and vague sentences or phrases. One word substitutes economize our language and lend social prestige.

Philanthropist – One who loves mankind

Misanthropist - One who hates mankind

Optimist – One who looks on the bright side of things

Pessimist - One who looks on the dark side of things

Fatalist – One who believes in fate

Autocracy - A government by one

Polygamy – Practice of having several wives

Polyandry - Practice of having several husbands

### **7. Words often confused**

There are certain pairs or set of words which are close in spelling, pronunciation or derivation. Some words in English are confusing due to their similarity in spelling and pronunciation.

### **8. Homonyms**

Homonyms are words that have the same spelling and the same pronunciation, but different meanings. She lost her **lead** in the final round - lead means 'advantage held by a competitor'

We need someone to **lead** the team – lead means 'be in charge of'

The police are following a **lead** – lead means 'clue pointing to possible solution'

### 9. Homographs

Homographs are words that have the same spelling but different meanings and different pronunciation

I watched the match **live** on TV

I **live** in America

The Chairman will **present** the award

My mother gave a **present** for Ugadi

### 10. Homophones

Homophones are words that have the same pronunciation but different spelling and different meaning.

The **Sun** rises in the East

Pavan met his **Son**

He bought a valuable **site** in Hyderabad

She has long **sight**

## Techniques of Teaching Vocabulary

- 1. Picture and Matchstick Diagrams:** Photos and pictures gathered from a variety of sources such as newspapers, magazines and internet help in teaching vocabulary. People easily understand the new words introduced by looking at pictures. Matchstick diagrams too help children a lot in learning vocabulary. Children can grasp what these words actually mean even if they are not translated.
- 2. Teaching a new words through association:** It is one of the easiest way to teaching new words by linking new words with vocabulary that the learners already know. The words provided to first-generation learners who have not yet began studying English.
- 3. By Showing real or Actual Objects:** If the things are small enough to be showing real objects, we can illustrate the object that a word represents when teaching vocabulary. Such real objects used are known as 'realia'. When realia are used, mother tongue need not to be used. Learners pick up the new words very fast. Cat, rat, candle watch and laptop can be shown directly. Many real objects can be utilized as realia while teaching new vocabulary words.\
- 4. By using the words in sentences:** Words in a sentence may give different meanings based on the context and usage in a sentence. words should be taught by employing them in appropriate phrases. Sentences should be written in such a way that the words meaning is clear. In addition to this, words should be used in short sentences so that even the most inexperienced learner may grasp the meaning of new words.
- 5. Encourage Extensive Reading:** Extensive reading also helps buildup new vocabulary words. Learners read whatever is interesting to them. Learners should develop reading abridged books with graded vocabulary published by different publishers and Newspapers.
- 6. By using learners mother tongue:** Sometimes and in certain situations, the learner may discover that communicating an idea or concept is difficult and time consuming. He had no choice but to use the vocabulary of the kids in his explanation at the time. However, such a chance would be extremely rare, only occurring once or twice.

7. **Explaining in simple, everyday language:** Whenever teaching hard words, new words or difficult vocabulary or teaching any new context teacher has to explain them simple, easy to understand words so that we can create interest among the learners.
8. **Prescribing a Dictionary and a note book:** One should follow a standard, excellent dictionary to develop new vocabulary words. The dictionary provides not only meaning of the words but also it provides synonyms, antonyms, parts of speech, usage and examples of the words.

### Conclusion

It is important to have a keener interest and greater interest to learn new vocabulary words. You cannot say that knowing the spelling and meaning of words enough to enhance vocabulary unless you can confidently use it in a sentence. The reason, why most of the people cannot speak in English fluently even they know its grammar, is that they are unable to recall the appropriate words. Apart from this lack of exposure is one of the biggest handicaps in language learning. Exposure refers to the English speaking atmosphere around us.

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