

THE PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF TEACHING VOCABULARY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract: *this paper explores various aspects of teaching vocabulary. Vocabulary items in this category are very difficult to learn and teach, while they are essential for reading comprehension, as well as for advanced-level writing and speech, where a certain level of lexical sophistication is part of communicative success. Apparently, the most important relation for such words is the collocation relation, and teaching vocabulary should be synonymous with teaching collocations. Students must be made conscious of the importance of multiword units in general and of collocations with words in particular.*

Keywords: *vocabulary, teaching, lexis, lexical item, collocation.*

ПРАКТИЧЕСКИЕ АСПЕКТЫ ОБУЧЕНИЯ ЛЕКСИКЕ АНГЛИЙСКОГО ЯЗЫКА В СРЕДНЕЙ ШКОЛЕ

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Аннотация: *в данной статье рассматриваются различные аспекты преподавания лексики. В этой категории словарный элемент очень трудно изучать, в то время как они имеют большое значение для понимания прочитанного, а также для написания продвинутого уровня и речи, где определенный уровень лексической сложности является частью коммуникативного успеха. По-видимому, самое важным соотношением для слов являются коллокация, отношение и обучение лексике должно быть синонимом обучения словосочетанию. Студенты должны знать о важности не однословных единиц в целом и словосочетаниях со словами, в частности.*

Ключевые слова: *словарь, обучение, лексика, лексический элемент, словосочетание.*

In 1980, Paul Meara characterized vocabulary learning as a “neglected aspect of language learning”. Now, more than twenty years later, the scenario looks quite different. Today, the studies being carried out on vocabulary acquisition are extensive and there are constantly new approaches evolving on how to improve and maximize students’ learning abilities.

“The English language is estimated to have anywhere from 100.000 to one million words, depending on how words are counted but in order to communicate in a language effectively the learner only has to master 20 000 words.

In order to obtain these 20000 words, teachers and learners have to make a choice, deciding which method/methods to use in the word acquisition process. There are various methods available for language teachers to work with, in order to increase and develop the students’ vocabulary. Therefore, it is of interest to study students’ views, thoughts and ideas on vocabulary acquisition, in order to know how teachers can contribute to optimizing their students’ learning experience.

In this paper, data on vocabulary teaching and learning strategies collected by means of questionnaires from student groups in the upper secondary school by use of questionnaires will be analyzed, compared and contrasted with the findings within the groups as well as between them.

Teacher attitudes to vocabulary have changed a lot over recent years. The use of the word *lexis* reflects a fundamental shift in understanding, attitude and approach. The increasing availability of corpora (large computerized databases of analyzable real conversations and other text), and dictionaries, grammar books and other resources based on them have revealed many surprising features of language that had been previously unrealized. An influential book, *The Lexical Approach* by Michael Lewis published in 1993, had a significant

impact on the profession in raising awareness of the importance of lexis and of the weaknesses of much classroom vocabulary work.

Vocabulary typically refers mainly to single words (e.g. dog, green, wash) and sometimes to very tightly link two or three word combinations (e.g. stock market, compact disk, and sky blue, go off).

The concept of lexis refers to our 'internal database' of words and complete 'ready-made' fixed/semi-fixed/typical combinations of words that we can recall and use quite quickly without having to construct new phrases and sentences word by word from scratch using our knowledge of grammar. Lexis includes:

- a) traditional single-word vocabulary items;
- b) common 'going-together patterns' of words (e.g. blonde hair, traffic jam).

These frequent combinations are known as **collocations**;

c) longer combinations of words that are typically used together as if they were a single item (e.g. someone you can talk to, on-the-spot decisions, I'd rather not say). These longer combinations (which a few years ago would probably not have been considered as anything remotely related to vocabulary) are commonly referred to as chunks or sometimes as **multiword items**. (Categories b and c are both classed as **lexical items**) [1, 226-227].

In generative linguistics, a lexis or lexicon is the complete set of all possible words in a language. In this sense, child, children, child's and children's are four different words in the English lexicon. In systemic-functional linguistics, a lexis or lexical item is the way one calls a particular thing or a type of phenomenon. Since lexis from a systemic-functional perspective is a way of calling, it can be realised by multiple grammatical words such as "The White House", "New York City" or "heart attack". Moreover, since lexis is a way of calling, different words such as child, children, child's and children's may realise the same lexical item.

"Lexis has undergone a dramatic transformation and come out less autonomous, more open to other layers of language, notably grammar, composed of both single words and multi-word units and entering into a complex network of paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations." These are very slippery terms, and most people would not fault you for using them essentially interchangeably. The major differences are what contexts you use them in, and what kind of people you use them with. There are several working definitions for each of them, all of which overlap a little bit.

1. Having done a good deal of research in lexicography (the compilation and organization of lexicons and dictionaries), you might think I should have a better grasp on this, but here's the best I can do at identifying the non-overlapping bits: A lexicon is a set or inventory of all the lexemes in a language. (What counts as a lexeme is a whole other question all on its own!). Lexis is the analytical level of a language that deals with vocabulary (as opposed to morphology or syntax). It's also defined as "the complete group of all words in a language", which, depending on how you define "word" vs. "lexeme", may or may not be the same thing as the lexicon. Languages with sufficiently productive morphology, for example, may have an infinite set of words (lexis), but will still have a finite lexicon of lexemes that can be listed in a dictionary. Vocabulary refers to a subset of words in a language that are used in a particular context or known to a particular person. Thus, you have "my vocabulary", "legal vocabulary", "vocabulary words for next week's quiz", and "the vocabulary you need to understand this book" [2, 219-237].

The National Reading Panel has issued a list consisting of different guidelines that teachers should pay attention to in order to create a multi-faceted learning environment:

1. Vocabulary should be taught both directly and indirectly.
2. Repetition and multiple exposures to vocabulary items are important.
3. Learning in rich contexts is valuable for vocabulary learning.
4. Vocabulary tasks should be restructured when necessary.
5. Vocabulary learning should entail active engagement in learning tasks.
6. Computer technology can be used to help in teaching vocabulary.
7. Vocabulary can be acquired through incidental learning.
8. How vocabulary is assessed and evaluated can have differential effects on instruction.
9. Dependence on a single vocabulary instruction method will not result in optimal learning.

This list presents factors that language teachers should try to keep in mind when structuring their vocabulary teaching. In the following section, a number of teaching methods being practiced in today's schools are explained.

After pupils have seen and heard a new lexical item for the first time, they will need opportunities to become more familiar with it, to practise recognizing, manipulating and using it. Many simple lexical practice activities are based around the following ideas:

- discussion, communicative activities and role-play requiring use of the lexical items;
- making use of the lexis in written tasks.

There are many published exercises on lexis. These include:

- matching pictures to lexical items;
- matching parts of lexical items to other parts, e.g. beginnings and endings;

- matching lexical items to others, e.g. collocations, synonyms, opposites, sets of related words, etc.;
- using prefixes and suffixes to build new lexical items from given words;
- classifying items into lists;
- using given lexical items to complete a specific task;
- filling in crosswords, grids or diagrams;
- filling in gaps in sentences;
- memory games.

Many such tasks seem to be designed for students working on their own, but can easily be used in class.

2. The process of teaching a foreign language is a complex one: as with many other subjects, it has necessarily to be broken down into components for purposes of study: the teaching acts of (1) presenting and explaining new material (2); providing practice; and (3) testing. In principle, the teaching processes of presenting, practicing and testing correspond to strategies used by many good learners trying to acquire a foreign language on their own. They make sure they perceive and understand new language; they make conscious efforts to learn it through; and they check themselves. In the class, it is teacher's job to promote these three learning processes by the use of appropriate teaching acts. Thus, he or she: presents and explains new material in order to make it clear, comprehensible and available for learning; gives practice to consolidate knowledge; and tests, in order to check what has been mastered and still needs to be learned and reviewed. These acts may not occur in this order, and may sometimes be combined within one activity; nevertheless good teachers are aware which their main object at any point is in a lesson. In modern teaching materials now in use the words pupils are to learn pass through the following stages:

1. Pupils listen to the words in sentences arranged in a structural group.
2. They learn the meaning of the words in various contexts.
3. Pupils learn the forms of the words.
4. They perform various exercises with the words in phrases and structures to assimilate the usage of the words.
5. Pupils use the words in speaking in various situations [3, 337-344].

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