

TEACHING AND LEARNING VOCABULARY

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Learning vocabulary

- requires an understanding of grammar as well as meaning;
- involves understanding meaning in context;
- involves understanding meaning relationships between words (e.g. synonyms, semantic fields).

Overview

1. Knowing about a word
2. Theories about vocabulary acquisition
3. Independent strategy development
4. Learning new words

1. Knowing about a word (1)

- **Receptive knowledge**

(understand it when it is spoken /written);

- **Memory**

(recall it when needed);

- **Conceptual knowledge**

(use it with the correct meaning);

Knowing about a word (2)

- **Phonological knowledge**

(hear the word and pronounce it acceptably, on its own and in phrases and sentences);

- **Grammatical knowledge**

(use it in a grammatically accurate way);

- **Collocational knowledge**

(know which other words can be used with it, e.g. *A beautiful view* not **a good-looking view*);

Knowing about a word (3)

- **Orthographic knowledge**
(spell it correctly);
- **Pragmatic knowledge, knowledge of style and register**
(use it in the right situation);
- **Connotational knowledge**
(know its positive and negative associations, know its associations with related words, e.g. *slim vs. skinny*);

Knowing about a word (4)

- **Metalinguistic knowledge**

(know explicitly about the word, e.g. its grammatical properties, e.g. to know that *pre* is a prefix).

2. Theories about vocabulary acquisition (1)

- **Explicit–implicit vocabulary-learning continuum:**

- 1) A **strong implicit-learning** hypothesis holds that words are acquired largely by unconscious means.
- 2) A **weak implicit-learning** hypothesis holds that words cannot be learned without at least some noticing or consciousness that it is a new word which is being learned.

Theories about vocabulary acquisition (2)

- 3) A **weak explicit-learning** hypothesis holds that learners are active processors of information and that a range of strategies are used to infer the meaning of a word, usually with reference to its context.
- 4) A **strong explicit-learning** hypothesis holds that a range of metacognitive strategies such as planning and monitoring are necessary for vocabulary learning; in particular, the greater the depth of processing involved in the learning, the more secure and long term the learning is likely to become.

The strong implicit-learning hypothesis

- Invites us to provide opportunities for incidental learning of vocabulary
- Extensive reading & listening can benefit learners at all levels

The strong explicit-learning hypothesis

- Hypothesis (4) has been the focus of attention more recently. Studies conclude that the more processes involved in the learning of the word the superior the retention and recall.
- Invites us to ask learners to consider a word's formal shape, its rhyming words, its synonyms, the semantic field in which it belongs and the kinds of sentence patterns into which it fits.

3. Independent strategy development

Teachers can encourage learners to use strategies, e.g.:

- Guessing meanings by using all the information available in a picture or text;
- Noticing grammatical information about words from the way they are used;
- Noticing links to similar words in their first language;
- Remembering where a word has been encountered before and how that helps with their form and meaning.

4. Learning new words (1)

By demonstration or pictures:

- using an object;
- using a cut-out figure;
- using gesture;
- performing an action;
- photographs;
- drawings or diagrams on the board;
- pictures from books;
- moving images from TV, video or computer.

Learning new words (2)

By verbal explanation:

- analytical definition (description);
- explaining the function of an object (e.g. an ambulance takes sick people to hospital);
- translating into another language;

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Summary

Topics covered:

- Knowing about a word
- Theories about vocabulary acquisition
- Independent Strategy development)
- Learning new words