

VISUAL AIDS AS A TOOL FOR VOCABULARY TEACHING

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In order to improve students' word power vocabulary has to be taught as the most essential aspect of language. It is easier to witness that students have been exposed to vocabulary items at some stages but cannot remember them when they need for interaction. In this situation, either communication breaks down or the teacher has to apply some appropriate strategy. Porter and Margaret (1992) assert that using visual materials not only make what you have to say more comprehensive to your students, they can make it more interesting as well.

Most important aspects of language teaching is the role of visual material: the importance of using visuals to make one's teaching more effective, communicative and interesting is well-known. However, many teachers even experienced teachers'; do not use the possible of visual materials to the full. In addition, deciding which techniques to use, for which language teaching purpose is often problematical. Singh (2005:177) also supports this idea by saying, "Often teachers know the value of certain visuals aids, but they fail to utilize them to the fullest because they do not take time to plan their use".

In general, the use of various types of visual materials help the learners in order to negotiate meaning, actively interact with one another and exchange views while their attention are on meaning which in turn develops their vocabulary knowledge. The visual expressive teacher can overcome customary mental resistances of the student with the support of the striking graphic image. Horn (1966:7) explains, "For the academically gifted child the visual can excite the imagination; for average students, stimulate; for the retarded child, clarify the visual image." According to Pintrich (2003) currently research indicates that student's motivation seems to be central in teaching-learning process. When the students learn vocabulary through visual materials they are struggling to develop their knowledge and cognitive power to be successful academically. In addition to this, Mayer and Massa (2003) elaborate that visualizer prefers to learn through the use of visual modes of thinking and instruction involving pictures. This indicates that visual learners have the advantages of using more than one medium to learn vocabulary even if they are good at processing visual things.

The use of various types of visual materials in teaching vocabulary increase the intrinsic motivation of the learners (Hill 1990). When the learners develop interest towards what they learn, they can actively engage themselves in the activities to be performed, which in turn assist them to learn language meaningfully. As to psychologists, visual materials contribute to the efficiency, depth, and variety of learning by stimulating learners' imagination. They arouse interests of the learners by appealing to several senses. This is because of they have the power to make learning more permanent, and their aesthetic character makes the teaching-learning process pleasant and enjoyable. Regarding this, Cook (2001) states that effective acquisition of vocabulary can never be just the learning of individual words and their meanings in isolation, but it needs the use of various senses to visualize the meaning of the words. Jordan (1997) points out that vocabulary development is of concern to all four language skills which can be facilitated through visual approach by associating words, remembering them and extending the networks. Mayer and Sims (1994) indicate that an increasing body of research evidence supports that students' learning are affected positively by presenting words and illustrations or pictures together. Allen (1983:24) points out, "Real objects are better than pictures whenever we have them in the classroom. When there are real windows, doors, walls, floors, desks, etc. in the classroom, it is foolish not to use them in our teaching." Harmer (1991) also states, "If a teacher wishes to introduce the word 'ring' which is worn on finger, it is by far easier to show the material to the students instead of devoting time on other techniques (P.161)."

Coppen (1969:102) explains: Children have to learn to read pictures and charts just as they have to learn to read printed words. The pictures must be simple and unambiguous, should not include irrelevant matter, and should be so designed that the visual emphasis falls on the teaching point. Colours should contrast well and all the main items should be large enough to be clearly visible to all children. In presenting the material, the children's attention must be directed in such a way that they observe, what is important and are able to draw conclusion from what they see.

It can be understood from the above quotation that pictures assist learners to negotiate word meanings during task performance; they are attending towards meaningful contexts, with immediate opportunities to use the new items in communication. Wright (1976:4) summarizes the role of picture in teaching vocabulary by saying, "A picture can often show an action more easily than even a talented actor can demonstrate." Besides, Dobson (1974:71-72) explains, "If you have a set of flashcards that show a figure or figures performing different activities such as sleeping, getting up, eating a meal, reading the newspaper, driving, working in an office and so on, you can have a student put the flashcards into a logical sequence and then tell a story based on the sequence." Flashcards and postcards develop the learners' self-study and create fun as they are easily shuffled. A teacher can draw a picture on the flashcards, or stick on a picture from a magazine that can be used for presenting and practicing new words as well as for revision purpose.

According to Doff (1988) teachers or learners do not need to be wonderful artists to draw a picture that can be used in teaching vocabulary; the most important thing is to communicate the message. Abebe (1997:ii) elaborates, "The knowledge of vocabulary is crucial for learning skills in reading, listening, writing and speaking". This clearly indicates that having sound knowledge of vocabulary facilitates the way for our students to be competent and effective user of the language. But none of them try to relate the teaching of vocabulary with visual materials.

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