



Learning Range of Vocabularies in Foreign Languages

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ABSTRACT

The article discusses the main features of vocabulary in learning foreign language. The author of the article analyses the importance hypothesis of vocabulary, main strategies, vital techniques, different instruction and various approaches (methods) theoretical and practically.

Keywords:

Vocabulary, Strategy, Knowledge, Form, Semantic.

Learning a second or foreign language, vocabulary serves an important role, since words are useful when we listen, speak, read and write. A reader or a listener needs to recognize words; a writer or a speaker has to utilize words in order to convey ideas. Second or foreign language learners with limited vocabulary will face difficulties in expressing and understanding ideas. Teachers should be aware of these difficulties, and try to facilitate the task for their learners, especially at the very first levels of learning English, in order to construct a strong and rich vocabulary.

Anderson and Freebody (1979), in Vocabulary Knowledge and Reading, discussed the role of vocabulary in reading comprehension. In their work, they focus mainly on knowing the meaning of a word rather than its form and use. Three different hypotheses have been suggested to highlight the importance of vocabulary. First, the instrumental hypothesis sheds light on the quantity of acquired words which leads to successful reading comprehension. Whereas the second one is called the aptitude hypothesis, its major point is that what leads to comprehend a text is the good brain that one can possess i.e.

“the mental lexicon”. While the third one, called knowledge hypothesis, looks at the culture as a main factor to comprehend any given text. These three hypotheses have been put in instructional implications for better vocabulary building. In addition, Anderson and Freebody dealt with “The Standard Theory of Semantics” in which they tried to provide adequate answers to the crucial question: “what does it mean to know the meaning of a word?” Moreover, breadth and depth vocabulary have been strongly discussed in this work. The former is defined as «the number of words for which a person knows at least part of the meaning” (Anderson and Freebody 17); while the latter concerns “the quality of vocabulary understanding” (Anderson and Freebody 15).

Moving from theory to practice, Krashen (1982) provided a theory of second language acquisition. This theory describes some very important hypotheses:

- 1) the acquisition and learning hypothesis,
- 2) the natural order hypothesis,
- 3) the monitor hypothesis,
- 4) the input hypothesis, which is considered the most important one since it attempts to provide

further explanations about how language is acquired at different levels; and lastly

5) the affective filter hypothesis, which correlates the affective variables with second language acquisition.

Concerning vocabulary learning and teaching, these hypotheses provide both learners and teachers with useful information in order to handle the difficulties which face them to fulfill their goals. Three main linguistic topics, semantics, lexicon, and vocabulary, have been discussed by Hatch and Brown (1995) in their book "Vocabulary, Semantics and Language Education". One can not teach or learn a word without knowing its meaning and form, so that the authors have talked about these concepts following such order. These three terms has been defined as follows:

Semantics refers to the study of meanings and the systematic ways those meanings are expressed in languages...lexicon refers to the overall system of word forms...and the way forms might be systematically represented in the brain ... Vocabulary refers to a list or set of words for a particular language(Hatch and Brown 1).

In the last part of their book, after developing more insights into semantics and lexicon, Hatch and Brown went on to deal with vocabulary learning and teaching. On the one hand, concerning vocabulary learning, they have reviewed the findings of Brown and Payne's analysis (1994) on determining the effective strategy used by learners while learning vocabulary. The results fall into five essential points: 1) having sources for encountering new words; 2) getting a clear image, either visual, auditory, or both; 3) getting the word meaning; 4) consolidating word form and meaning in memory; 5) using the word. In addition, intentional and incidental learning have been discussed as well. On the other hand, what teachers do and what they should do to help their learners have been also widely described, focusing on unplanned and planned vocabulary adjustments and teaching.

Dealing with a wide range of issues related to teaching and explaining vocabulary, Nation (2001), in his book "Learning Vocabulary in Another Language", has covered a number of

theoretical and practical issues. The eleven chapters of this book have dealt with what it means to know a word, the importance of vocabulary and its relation with the four skills, vocabulary knowledge and use, learning strategies, and other related topics. Furthermore, he went on to discuss common classroom issues such as using realia (objects) and pictures, word translation, what teachers should do to help their learners master vocabulary appropriately, and the time allocated for that task.

Besides what has been presented by the previous experts, Carter (2002) has proposed extra reliable data associated with vocabulary. Carter's book, "Vocabulary", has been divided into three parts: foundations, reviews, and case studies. He has discussed a number of points such as what is in a word, core vocabulary, word patterns, lexical issues, and vocabulary learning and teaching. Beyond that, he has reported and compared the process of vocabulary acquisition in L1 and L2; and has mentioned a crucial issue considering the retention and recall of words i.e. memorization. Various techniques have been suggested in order to make words easier to remember. Giving synonyms in the target language, translate it to the mother tongue, or using pictures' representations are among these techniques (Carter 193). Repetition, furthermore, is also considered as one of the useful techniques. He has pointed out that large amount of words are learned through repetition. Extra techniques have been also mentioned in Carter's work such as guessing from the context and keyword technique.

Recently, the interest on vocabulary was widely progressed. Hiebert,H. and L. Kamil (2005) are among the experts who have studied deeply vocabulary acquisition and instruction. In their book, "Teaching and Learning Vocabulary", they have summarized the findings of scholars, in which they have provided answers to the following questions: 1) How one can learn and teach vocabulary? 2) How can vocabulary learning and teaching influenced by age and culture? 3) What words should be more emphasized in instruction? Consequently, the work clusters around three parts: the first part considers the perspectives on how vocabulary is

learned, focusing more on the correlation between vocabulary and reading comprehension; the second part consists of the instructions that enhance vocabulary; the third part presents perspectives on which words to choose for instruction. Still within the same context, Jim Scrivener (2005) has collected numerous strategies and approaches which might help teachers in their classrooms. His book, "Learning Teaching", is considered as a guide to classroom teaching methodology. Exclusively, the author has suggested what he called "toolkits" of possibilities and guidelines useful for teachers. The book is divided into seventeen chapters, ending with helpful appendices and useful indexes. The first chapters dealt with general issues in teaching: classroom activities, classroom management, lessons and courses, and also the four skills (receptive and productive ones). Interestingly, the eleventh chapter dealt with common issues in lexis: what is lexis? How to present lexis in classroom? How to know and remember lexical items? This chapter goes importantly with our main topic. Then, in the chapter before the last, the author suggested a number of instructional tools and aids used in classroom, these aids could be visual like flashcards and pictures, or audio like songs and music, or both, audio-visual like DVDs and computers. Skimming over these previous books has been very satisfying for us. They have shed light on major points in our research. Mainly, all the works have emphasized the subject of vocabulary teaching and learning. The works of Anderson and Freebody (1979), Hatch and Brown (1995), Nation (2001), Carter (2002), H. Hierbert and L. Kamil (2005) have discussed deeply many theoretical foundations and practical implications related to vocabulary instruction. Beyond that, they have provided lots of strategies and techniques useful in classroom, such as: repetition, guessing from context, and using games...etc. In our research, we are going to highlight, importantly, the use of these technological materials, in vocabulary teaching and learning.

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