
Strategies to Teach Technical Vocabulary for Better Retention

Preetha Anthony, Lecturer, UTAS, Shinas (Oman),

Dr.P.Aparna, Professor & HoD, H&M Department, GNITS, Hyderabad.

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Abstract

Vocabulary teaching is one of the essential prerequisites of any language learning process. Moreover, teaching technical vocabulary is necessary for English for Specific Purpose courses. There are various strategies to teach vocabulary. This paper aims to suggest five strategies of teaching vocabulary proposed by Janelle Cox (2019), which can be adapted to the technical language teaching context.

Keywords: language, Specific Purpose, strategies, teaching.

There are many strategies to teach vocabulary. However, the most critical and relevant design is to engage the learners in active, meaningful tasks and activities like identification of technical terms and building a word bank in their fields of interest by themselves. The language teacher plays the role of a facilitator. Meaningful learning of technical vocabulary also calls for learning technical words in a situation or context rather than in isolation (although the latter can be helpful in some ways and with some technical terms). The reason could be that the contextual information could often facilitate

the learners to figure out and better comprehend the meanings of specialized words (Nation 2013).

Additionally, learning technical words in a situation or context facilitates the learners to acquire the typical collocates of such words, which are essential information in technical vocabulary learning because, like words in general, technical words often have their typical collocates (Nazar 2016). Online specialized data sources and technical corpora, including terminology banks/bases, are generally helpful for context-based learning of the meanings and typical collocates of technical words (Alcina 2009; Fernández et al. 2009). Such tools can provide learners with different opportunities and resources to recognize and compile their specialized word banks (Fernández et al., 2009).

Janelle Cox (2019) proposes five different vocabulary teaching strategies. They are:

- i. word detective,
- ii. semantic maps,
- iii. word wizard,
- iv. concept cube and
- v. word connect.

Word Detective

One of the most valuable things to increase the students' vocabulary is to

motivate them to read. An essential pathway for word acquisition is the wide range of reading. This activity facilitates students to learn and use words in different situations and contexts, thereby deepening their knowledge. Students can find new words as they come across them in their daily reading. The word detective works in the following way:

The teacher gives the students a list of keywords to search for the meaning. Students must write each intended word and its sentence on a note, and then keep it on their desk whenever they encounter a keyword. Students can devote a few minutes to reading each letter in their leisure time.

Semantic Maps

A semantic map helps the students systematize the relationship between different pieces of information. Researchers have recognized this strategy as a great way to increase students' vocabulary acquisition. Students can use semantic mapping as a pre-reading activity to introduce keywords or the active prior knowledge. This may also be used as a post-reading activity to increase understanding by counting new concepts on the map. It works in the following way:

The teacher comes up with a word and writes it on the board. Then, students can read the word and are required to think about even other words that come to mind whenever they read it. Then, students can make a list of all of the words. Students also can share the recorded words; then, as a class, the words are categorized. Once those

category names are assigned, a class map can be created and discussed. After that, students are asked to suggest more categories for the map or add up to the old notes.

Word Wizard

Word Wizard is an effective way for the students to learn and process information. It's a kind of jigsaw learning technique, which is an effective and quick way for students to work with their partners while learning essential vocabulary words. Each student is responsible in this activity for learning any new words and teaching those words to their peers. It works in the following way: The teacher can divide students into different groups. Every student in the group is accountable for learning any new words. Every "word wizard" is taught to write the definition of the word in their own words and draw an illustration of the word. After every "word wizard" has completed their task, it is their work to return to their group and instruct their peers on what they have learned. Every group member can copy the new words they know from each member in their notebooks.

Concept Cube:

Concept cube is another excellent strategy to learn new words. A paper divided into six equal squares is given to students. They are instructed to write down one of the following on each of the squares:

- Root word
- Antonym
- Synonym
- Category belongs to
- Essential characteristics, and
- Example

Then, students can make a cube by cutting, folding, and taping the paper. They roll their cube with writing and can recall the relationship of the word that lands on top of the original word.

Word Connect

Through word connect; students can compare similarities and differences within words. It provides students with new exposures to terms, which assists them in retaining what they have learned. For this activity, students are directed to connect two words written in the center of a diagram. Their task is to connect the two words by writing down each word's definition on the diagram, then explaining the reason for the connection. Implementing a variety of approaches will help prevent boredom. Experiment with different strategies and techniques to determine which ones work the best for your specific students.

Conclusion

All the strategies mentioned above would work effectively with any level of students in any context with a proper understanding of the vocabulary-building

needs of the learners and efficient execution.

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