

TECHNIQUES IN TEACHING VOCABULARY

AT THE BEGINNERS LEVEL.

Teaching vocabulary at this level is very important element of teaching English, because children, knowing more and more words, can better communicate with other children. It is the most important thing in teaching foreign language.

We, the teachers, can use different and interesting techniques, which make English lessons more exciting and motivating for students:

A) REALIA-this word refers to the use of real objects in the classroom. These objects help to make the meaning of word clear (ex. A pen, a postcard, a ball etc.) The teacher may also use classroom environment : a chair, a table, a board. Things in the classroom can also be “ touched “, what is important to V. Allen (1983), who claims that success in learning depends on the number of senses involved in the learning process and,however, realia is a vital part in presenting vocabulary at the beginners level, where pupils learn words, using concrets.

B) PICTURES- may be the most useful “ aids” in language teaching, since they are used in different ways. There are: pictures, blackboard drawings, wall pictures, charts, photos from magazines. Those “aids” are used to explain the meaning of words or to create a situation and concept.

C) MIME, ACTION AND GESTURE -this technique is useful for explanation of the actions and grammar items. Such concepts as: jumping, smoking or the words : “ from, on, to “ etc. Are easy items to explain through performing those actions. Mime, action is a great fun for children who like acting and moving very much.

All techniques introduced above are good for presenting new vocabulary to students at the beginners level because they are very interesting and involving for them.

The following several techniques can be used only with those students, who have some knowledge of English, so those techniques can be used at the upper-beginners level.

D) CONTRAST- as Y. Fenging states in “Forum” (July 1994), contrast usually shows the similarities and differences between persons ideas and things eg. “The major points of your plan are clear to me, but details are still hazy”. “But” introduces a clause that contrasts in meaning with the previous one and “hazy” is opposite of “clear”.

E) ENUMERATION -this technique helps when any word is difficult to explain visually. We can say 'clothes' and explain this by enumerating or listing various items. Teacher may list a number of clothes e.g. a dress, a skirt, trousers etc., and then the meaning of the word will become clear. The same is true of 'vegetable' or 'furniture,' for example. (Harmer 1991).

F) EXPLANATION -this is such a technique which is assigned to be utilised with upper-beginners, who already have some knowledge of English. It is essential for the teacher to bear in mind, that while explaining certain words he should use the language, that is comprehensible for the students. Moreover, the information about the frequency of the word should be included.

G) SYNONYMS this technique relies on explanation of meaning of new word by giving other word, which students know and understand, and which means nearly the same. For example: little-small, huge-big etc. The number of synonyms appearing in textbooks is reasonable, in this way they can be introduced rather early.

H) ANTONYMS -in this technique teacher explains the meaning of new word, by giving its opposite, if students know the word meaning contrary feature e.g. Warm -is not cold. With saying the antonym the gesture of hand should be combined.

I) DEFINITION -is suitable method for upper-beginners and relies on giving the definition of given word. It can be simple, unnecessary precise and scientific definition, given by the teacher. It can be the definition from the dictionary. This is a good method in mobilization of students to the usage of dictionaries.

J) POLISH EQUIVALENT -in this method the teacher gives the translation of given word in the national language. The translation is the quickest way of demonstrating the meaning of vocabulary items. However, being often exposed to this presentation technique, the students may be discouraged from interacting with words. Thus, when presenting vocabulary, the teacher is obliged to bear in mind the techniques and also the fact, that words are learnt better if introduced in groups (when one word can be associated with another). Furthermore, the lexical item, as is quoted above, must be taught in context. The reason is, that "the meaning of many words can change, according to their use in particular sentences and particular context". (Forum July, 1974).

Teacher should not ignore these facts, but present the vocabulary and then enable students to practise the language in meaningful ways.

The translation is a method which is used when it allows to save the time during the explanation of new vocabulary item. But, unfortunately, it is overused by the teachers, what can cause a lot of negative effects, such as:

- The treating a foreign language by the students like the literal translation from the native language, what leads to various lexical and grammatical errors.

- Forgetting words, by lack of practising according to vocabulary, which would appear in natural way in explanations, synonyms, antonyms and definitions.

- Fear of the texts, which sense would be comprehensible for the students in spite of unfamiliarity of some words.

- The slow development of listening skills.

- The slow tempo of learning, which is natural consequence the fact, that some fragments of the lesson go on in Polish language.

A simple vocabulary lesson at beginners or upper-beginners level might involve the teacher using techniques such as shown above to introduce the learner to a short list of new words. If the words are related to each other in some way, then the lesson might feel more unified than if the lists contain a more varied or random selection and is also likely to be easier to remember. This input of new vocabulary would probably be followed by a practice activity in which the learners could find ways to use the words that they had just met or revised. Used by the teacher teaching techniques can be different but they must be fitted to the learner's knowledge level and should be used, to make the lesson more interesting and more efficient.

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