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ACQUISITION OF VOCABULARY FOR SPANISH SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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0. ABSTRACT AND RESUMEN

Abstract: There are many methods to teach vocabulary to Spanish students of English as a foreign language nowadays. Beyond memorizing, like it has been typical during much time, teachers can use techniques, methods and even their own imagination to make their students learn vocabulary in a more enjoyable manner.

Apart from teachers' role, learners' role is also important. They may have different reasons for learning, they may learn in different contexts, they may be different also, their motivation and responsibility for learning may also influence in the way they learn. All around the world, students of all ages are learning to speak English, but their reasons for wanting to study English can differ greatly. Some students, of course, only learn English because it is on the curriculum at secondary level, but for others, studying the language reflects some kind of a choice.

Key words: *L2: second language, L1: first language, receptive knowledge, productive knowledge, target-language community, EFL: English as a foreign language, ESL: English, as a second language, intensive reading, extensive reading, incidental learning, intentional learning, explicit learning, explicit teaching, explicit instruction, VLS: vocabulary learning strategies, high-frequency words, low-frequency words, meaning-focused input, meaning-focused output, language-focused instruction, mnemonic devices, syllabus.*

Resumen: Hoy día hay muchos métodos para enseñar vocabulario a los estudiantes españoles de inglés como lengua extranjera. Aparte de los clásicos métodos como memorizar interminables listas, los profesores pueden usar técnicas y métodos para hacer que sus estudiantes aprendan vocabulario de formas más entretenidas y no tan aburridas y mecanizadas.

Aparte del papel que tienen los profesores, el papel de los estudiantes es también importante. Cada estudiante puede tener diferentes razones para aprender, pueden aprender en contextos diferentes, su motivación y responsabilidad para aprender también puede influir en la forma en la que aprenden. Hay estudiantes de inglés alrededor del mundo pero sus razones para estudiarlo pueden ser totalmente diferentes. Algunos pueden estudiarlo simplemente porque está en el programa de sus institutos, pero para otros estudiar inglés puede ser su propia elección.

Palabras clave: *segunda lengua, primera lengua, conocimiento receptivo, conocimiento productivo, comunidad del idioma de destino, inglés como lengua extranjera, inglés como segunda lengua, lectura intensa, lectura extensa, aprendizaje incidental, aprendizaje intencionado, aprendizaje explícito, enseñanza explícita, instrucción explícita, estrategias para el aprendizaje de vocabulario, palabras muy frecuentes, palabras poco frecuentes, información de entrada enfocada en el significado, información de salida enfocada en el significado, lengua enfocada en la instrucción, dispositivos mnemotécnicos, temario.*

1. INTRODUCTION

According to Schmitt (2000), the mechanics of vocabulary learning are still something of a mystery, but one thing we can be sure of is that words are not instantaneously acquired, at least not for adult second language learners. Rather, they are gradually learned over a period of time from numerous exposures. This incremental nature of vocabulary acquisition manifests itself in a number of ways. We have all had the experience of being able to recognize and understand a word when we see it in a text or hear it in a conversation, but not being able to use it ourselves. This common situation shows that there are different degrees of knowing a word. Being able to understand a word is known as *receptive knowledge* and is normally connected with listening and reading. If we are able to produce a word of our own accord when speaking or writing, then that is considered *productive knowledge* (passive/active are alternative terms).

The assumption is that people learn words receptively first and later achieve productive knowledge. This generally seems to be the case, but in language learning there are usually exceptions. We may have a good productive mastery over the spoken form of a word but not over its written form. This suggests that we also need to consider the various facets of knowing a word. Of course, everyone realizes that a word's meaning must be learned before that word can be used. In addition, there is the practical matter of mastering either the spoken or the written form of the word before it can be used in communication. A person who has not thought about the matter may believe that vocabulary knowledge consists of just these two facets – meaning and word form. But the potential knowledge that can be known about a word is rich and complex. Nation (1990) proposes the following list of the different kinds of knowledge that a person must master in order to know a word.

- The meaning(s) of the word
- The written form of the word
- The spoken form of the word
- The grammatical behavior of the word
- The collocations of the word
- The register of the word
- The associations of the word
- The frequency of the word

These are known as types of *word knowledge*, and most or all of them are necessary to be able to use a word in the wide variety of language situations one comes across. The different types of word knowledge are not necessarily learned at the same time, however. Being able to use a word in oral discourse does not necessarily entail being able to spell it. Similarly, a person will probably know at least one meaning for a word before knowing all of its derivate forms. Each of the word-knowledge types is likely to be learned in a gradual manner, but some may develop later than others and at different rates. From this perspective, vocabulary acquisition must be incremental, as it is clearly impossible to gain immediate mastery of all these word knowledges simultaneously.

Nation's list is convenient in that it separates the components of lexical knowledge for us to consider. But we must remain aware that this is an expedient, and in reality the different kinds of word knowledge are almost certainly interrelated. For example, frequency is related to formality (part of register) in that more frequent words tend to be less formal, and less frequent words tend to be more formal.

2. LEARNERS

According to Jeremy Harmer (2007), many people learn English because they have moved into a target-language community and they need to be able to operate successfully within that community. A target-language community is a place where English is the national language - e.g. Britain, Canada, New Zealand, etc. - or where it is one of the main languages of culture and commerce – e.g. India, Pakistan, Nigeria. The purposes students have for learning will

have an effect on what it is they want and need to learn, and as a result will influence what they are taught. Business English students, for example, will want to spend a lot of time concentrating on the language needed for specific business transactions and situations. Students living in a target-language community will need to use English to achieve their immediate practical and social needs. Students of general English (including those studying the language as part of their secondary education) will not have such specific needs, of course, and so their lessons (and the materials which the teachers use) will almost certainly look different from those for students with more clearly identifiable needs.

English is learnt and taught in many different contexts, and in many different class arrangements. Such differences will have a considerable effect on how and what it is we teach.

For many years we have made a distinction between people who study English as a foreign language and those who study it as a second or other language. It has been suggested that students of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) tend to be learning so that they can use English when travelling or to communicate with other people, from whatever country, who also speak English. ESL (English as a Second Language) students, on the other hand, are usually living in the target-language community. The latter may need to learn the particular language variety of that community rather than a more general language variety. The English they learn, therefore, may differ from that studied by EFL students, whose needs are not so specific to a particular time and place.

A huge number of students learn English in primary and secondary classrooms around the world. They have not chosen to do this by themselves, but learn because English is on the curriculum. Depending on the country, area and the school itself, they may have the advantage of the latest classroom equipment and information technology, or they may, as in many parts of the world, be sitting in rows in classrooms with a blackboard and no other teaching aid.

Private language schools, on the other hand, tend to be better equipped than some government schools (though this is not always the case). They will frequently have smaller class sizes, and, crucially, the students in them may well have chosen to come and study. This will affect their motivation at the beginning of the process.

The vast majority of language classes in the world take place in educational institutions such as the schools and language schools we have already mentioned. In such situations teachers

have to be aware of school policy and conform to syllabus and curriculum decisions taken by whoever is responsible for the academic running of the school. They may well be learning outcomes which students are expected to achieve, and students may be preparing for specific exams.

One of the greatest differences between adolescents and young children is that these older children have developed a greater capacity for abstract thought as they have grown up. In other words, their intellects are kicking in, and they can talk about more abstract ideas, teasing out concepts in a way that younger children find difficult. Many adolescents readily understand and accept the need for learning of a more intellectual type. At their best, adolescent students have a great capacity for learning, enormous potential for creative thought and a passionate commitment to things which interest them. Adolescence is bound up with a search for identity and a need for self-esteem. This is often the result of the students' position within their peer group rather than being the consequence of teacher approval.

Another aspect of individual variation lies in the students' cultural and educational background. Some children come from homes where education is highly valued, and where parental help is readily available. Other children, however, may come from less supportive backgrounds where no such backup is on offer. Where students have different cultural backgrounds from the teacher or from each other, they may feel differently from their classmates about topics in the curriculum. They may have different responses to classroom practices from the ones the teacher expected or the ones which the writers of the course book they are using had anticipated.

According to Nation (1990), it is useful to make distinction between direct and indirect vocabulary learning. In direct vocabulary learning the learners do exercises and activities that focus their attention on vocabulary. Such exercises include word-building exercises, guessing words from context when this is done as a class exercise, learning words in lists, and vocabulary games. In indirect vocabulary learning the learners' attention is focused on some other feature, usually the message that is conveyed by a speaker or writer. If the amount of unknown vocabulary is low in such messages, considerable vocabulary learning can occur even though the learners' attention is not directed toward vocabulary learning. But certain conditions must apply for such learning to occur.

1. First, the learners must be interested in understanding the message. From the point of view of vocabulary learning, this interest creates a need to understand the unknown words in the message.
2. The message should contain some items that are just outside the learner's present level of achievement. These items, however, should be understandable from the context in which they occur. This includes both language and nonlanguage contexts.
3. The learners should not feel worried or threatened by their contact with the foreign language.

There is a place for both direct and indirect vocabulary learning activities. This is in fact another way of saying that contact with language in use should be given more time than decontextualized activities.

3. TEACHERS

Most people can look back at their own schooldays and identify teachers they thought were good. But generally they find it quite hard to say why certain teachers struck them as special. Perhaps it was because of their personality. Possibly it was because they had interesting things to say. Maybe the reason was that they looked as if they loved their job, or perhaps their interest in their students' progress was compelling. Sometimes, it seems, it was just because the teacher was a fascinating person.

One of the reasons that it is difficult to give general descriptions of good teachers is that different teachers are often successful in different ways. Some teachers are more extrovert or introvert than others, for example, and different teachers have different strengths and weaknesses. A lot will depend, too, on how students view individual teachers and here again, not all students will share the same opinions.

Effective teachers are well-prepared. Part of this preparation resides in the knowledge they have of their subject and the skill of teaching. Students will learn more successfully if they enjoy activities they are involved in and are interested or stimulated by the topics we bring into the classroom. Teachers should make their lessons interesting. Of course, in many institutions, topics and activities are decreed to some extent by the material in the course book that is being used. But even in such situations there is a lot we can do to make sure we can cater for the range of needs and interests of the students in our classes.

Language teachers need to know how the language works. This means having a knowledge of the grammar system and understanding the lexical system: how words change their shape depending on their grammatical function, and how they group together into phrases. They need to be aware of pronunciation features such as sounds, stress and intonation.

3.1. IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHERS

According to Schmitt (2000), vocabulary is learned incrementally and this obviously means that lexical acquisition requires multiple exposures to a word. This is certainly true for incidental learning, as the chances of learning and retaining a word from one exposure when reading are quite low. Other studies suggest that it requires five to sixteen or more repetitions for a word to be learned (Nation, 1990). If recycling is neglected, many partially known words will be forgotten, wasting all the effort already put into learning them. Fortunately, this recycling occurs naturally as more frequent words appear repeatedly in texts and conversations. This repetition does not happen to nearly as great an extent for less frequent words, so teachers should look for ways to bolster learner input to offset this. Extensive reading seems to be one effective method.

For explicit learning, however, recycling has to be consciously built into any study program. Teachers must guard against presenting a word once and then forgetting about it, or else their students will do the same. This implies developing a more structured way of presenting vocabulary that reintroduces words repeatedly in classroom activities. Learning activities themselves need to be designed to require multiple manipulations of a word, such as in vocabulary notebooks in which students have to go back and add additional information about the words. Understanding how memory behaves can help us design programs that give maximum benefit from revision time spent.

Learners benefit from a complementary combination of explicit teaching and incidental learning. Explicit teaching can supply valuable first introductions to a word, but of course not all lexical aspects can be covered during these encounters. The varied contexts in which learners encounter the word during later incidental meetings can lead to broader understanding of its collocations, additional meaning senses, and other higher-level knowledge. In addition, repeated exposure will help to consolidate the lexical aspects first learned.

Additionally, explicit teaching is probably essential for the most frequent words of any second language (L2), because they are prerequisites for language use. The learning of these basic words cannot be left to chance, but should be taught as quickly as possible, because they open to the door to further learning. Less frequent words, on the other hand, may be best learned by reading extensively, because there is just not enough time to learn them all through conscious study. Thus, explicit teaching and incidental learning complement each other well, with each being necessary for an effective vocabulary program.

It is probably worth considering adding a vocabulary learning strategies component to our vocabulary program for Secondary School Students. We will not be able to teach all the words students will need, and even the input generated by extensive reading has its limitations. Students will eventually need to effectively control their own vocabulary learning.

3.2. VOCABULARY IN A LEARNING COURSE

According to Nation (1990), vocabulary teaching can fit into a language learning course in any of four ways. Most courses make use of all four, but the amount of time spent on each of these ways depends on the teacher's judgement in relation to a large number of factors, such as the time available, the age of the learners, the amount of contact with English outside school hours, and the teacher's theory of how language is best learned. The four ways described below are listed from the most indirect to the most direct.

1. Material is prepared with vocabulary learning as a consideration. The most common examples of this are the preparation of simplified material and the careful vocabulary grading of the first lessons of learning English. To an observer of such an English course it might appear as if no attention is being given to vocabulary, but in fact the selection and grading of vocabulary has been given a lot of attention before the course begins.
2. Words are dealt with as they happen to occur. This means that if an unknown word appears in a reading passage, the teacher gives some attention to it at the moment it causes a problem. A lot of vocabulary teaching is done in this way. Although the selection of vocabulary seems unplanned, the way it is treated need not be. Teachers may follow principles when dealing with such words. For example, they draw attention to the underlying concept of the word rather than just giving a contextual definition. They point out regular features of the spelling of other words. They focus

attention on the learning burden of the word, and they carefully avoid “unteaching”. They consider the frequency and usefulness of a word when deciding how much time to spend on it.

3. Vocabulary is taught in connection with other language activities. For example, the vocabulary of a reading passage is dealt with before the learners read the passage. Through direct teaching and reading the learners become familiar with the topic vocabulary before they need to use it in the formal speaking activity. Another possibility is to have vocabulary exercises following reading or listening texts. “Find the words in the passage which mean...” is the most common example of this. In all the activities described here, the teaching vocabulary is directly related to some other language activity.
4. Time is spent either in class or out of school on the study of vocabulary without an immediate connection with some other language activity. For example, time is spent on learning spelling rules or on activities like dictionary use, guessing words, the use of word parts, or list learning. This time can be spent on activities involving the whole class as in learning mnemonic techniques, using pair or group work as in paraphrase activities or combining arrangement exercises, or individually as in the use of vocabulary puzzles or code exercises. Such vocabulary work can have the aim of establishing previous learning or increasing vocabulary so that future language use can go more smoothly.

4. VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES

According to Schmitt (2000), one approach of facilitating vocabulary learning that has attracted increasing attention is *vocabulary learning strategies* (VLS). Interest in VLS has paralleled a movement away from a predominantly teaching-oriented perspective to one that includes interest in how the actions of learners might affect their acquisition of language. It seems that many learners do use strategies for learning vocabulary, especially when compared to language tasks that integrate several linguistic skills (e.g., oral presentation that involves composing the speech content, producing comprehensible pronunciation, fielding questions, etc.). This might be due to the relatively discrete nature of vocabulary learning compared to more integrated language activities, making it easier to apply strategies effectively. It may

also be due to the fact that classrooms tend to emphasize discrete activities over integrative ones, or that students particularly value vocabulary learning.

Commonly used VLS seem to be simple memorization, repetition, and taking notes on vocabulary. These more mechanical strategies are often favored over more complex ones requiring significant active manipulation of information (imagery, inferencing, keyword method). If we follow the depth of processing perspective, it would seem that learners often favor relatively “shallow” strategies, even though they may be less effective than “deeper” ones. Indeed, research into some “deeper” vocabulary learning strategies, such as forming associations (Cohen & Aphek, 1981) and using the Keyword Method (Hulstijn, 1997), have been shown to enhance retention better than rote memorization. However, even rote repetition can be effective if students are accustomed to using it. Secondary School students can benefit from the context usually included in deeper activities.

Rather than being used individually, multiple VLS are often used concurrently. This means that active management of strategy use is important. Good learners do things such as use of variety of strategies, structure their vocabulary learning, review and practice target words, and they are aware of the semantic relationships between new and previously learned L2 words; that is, they are conscious of their learning and take steps to regulate it.

When considering which vocabulary learning strategies to recommend to our students, we need to consider the overall learning context. The effectiveness with which learning strategies can be both taught and used will depend on a number of variables, including the proficiency level, L1 and culture of students, their motivation and purposes for learning the L2, the text and task being used, and the nature of the L2 itself. It is important to gain cooperation of the learners, because a study has shown that students who resisted strategy training learned worse than those who relied on their familiar rote repetition approach (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). We thus have to take learning culture into consideration, because learners from different culture groups sometimes have quite different opinions about the usefulness of various vocabulary learning strategies. Proficiency level has also been shown to be quite important, with one study showing word lists better for beginning students, and contextualized words better for more advanced students (Cohen & Aphek, 1981). In addition, the frequency of the target words is relevant. High-frequency words should probably be taught, so they mainly require strategies for review and consolidation, whereas low-frequency words will mostly be met incidentally while reading or listening, and so initially require strategies for determining their meanings, such as guessing from context and using word parts (Nation, 1990).

4.1. EXAMPLES OF VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES

There are numerous different VLS, with one list containing fifty-eight different strategies (Schmitt, 1997). Some of the strategies appear in the following list:

4.1.2. *Strategies for the discovery of a new word's meaning*

- Analyze part of speech
- Analyze affixes and roots
- Check for L1 cognate
- Analyze any available pictures or gestures
- Guess meaning from textual context
- Use a dictionary (bilingual or monolingual)
- Ask teacher for a synonym, paraphrase, or L1 translation of new word
- Ask classmates for meaning

4.1.3. *Strategies for consolidating a word once it has been encountered*

- Study and practice meaning in a group
- Interact with native speakers
- Connect word to a previous personal experience
- Associate the word to its synonyms and antonyms
- Use semantic maps
- Image word form
- Image word's meaning
- Use Keyword Method
- Group words together to study them
- Study the spelling of a word

- Say new word aloud when studying
- Use physical action when learning a word
- Verbal repetition
- Written repetition
- Word lists
- Put English labels on physical objects
- Keep a vocabulary notebook
- Use English-language media (songs, movies, newscasts, etc.)
- Use spaced word practice (expanding rehearsal)
- Test oneself with word tests
- Skip or pass new word
- Continue to study word over time

It seems that learners do use strategies and find them helpful. This suggests that we should incorporate strategy training in our classes, but raises the question of how effective such training is. Research is inconclusive on this point: some studies report a reasonable degree of success, whereas others report only limited success, or even student resistance.

VLS have a great deal of potential, but we must be very sensitive to our learners and their needs when incorporate strategy instruction into our curriculum.

5. TEACHING VOCABULARY

At beginners levels, teachers frequently use explain and practice procedures. For example, we might have individual pictures on flashcards showing people who are tired, sad, happy, frightened, exhausted, etc. We hold up a picture, point to it and say “tired...she’s tired”, while miming a yawn. Then we model “tired” and get the students to repeat it. Next, we hold up (or point to) the next picture and model “sad”. As the students learn more words, we conduct a cue-response drill, holding up different flashcards (or pointing to different pictures) so that the students give the correct word. Students can then use the words in their own sentences.

For any classes above the complete beginner level we can assume that different students will know a range of different lexical items. A way of exploiting this is to get the class (with our help) to build their own vocabulary tree. For example, suppose that intermediate students are working on a unit about homes and houses, we might put a diagram on the board. Then students are asked to add to the diagram as extensively as they can. Perhaps we put them in different groups, one for each room (kitchen, bedroom, dining room, etc) and they have to come up with as many words as possible for their room. Or perhaps they just come up to the board, one by one, to add to the diagram, using chalk or marker pens. While they are doing this, we can help out with spellings and pronunciation – and when the diagram is as complete as the students can make it, we can do pronunciation work and/or add any important words which we think are missing.

5.1. EXAMPLE OF VOCABULARY ACTIVITIES

This kind of activity draws on the students' existing knowledge (which is why it is appropriate for elementary levels onwards); the students are involved; there is movement and discussion, and the teacher is on hand to explain and practice when it is necessary.

At higher levels, we can ask students to take even more responsibility for decision-making about how words are used. The following example is all about vocabulary associated with the weather, including the metaphorical uses we have for weather lexis.

The activity starts when students are asked to say what their favourite kind of weather is. When they have done this, we tell them they are going to do some language research. Students are given a series of weather phrases, e.g.: blazing sun, blizzard, breeze, downpour, gale, heavy shower, heavy snowfall, light shower, light breeze, light snowfall, strong breeze, strong sunshine, strong wind, sunshine, torrential rain. They are told to use the words to complete the middle column of a table by looking for the words in a dictionary, on a CD-ROM, by using a search engine on the Internet and/or by talking to each other. When they have done this (and we have checked through their tables), we can ask them to put the following weather-related verbs in the right-hand column of the chart: blow, drizzle, fall, howl, pour, roar, scorch, settle, shine, and whistle.

	least severe <-----> most severe	associated verbs
rain	light shower, heavy shower...	
snow		
sun		
wind		

Once again, they do this by researching the words for themselves. We only help them if they get stuck or when the activity finishes and we check through what they have found out (we can draw the chart on the board and have the students come and fill it in). Students are then asked to tell each other about the worst weather they have ever been in – or to describe a day they remember that was particularly memorable because of the weather.

Finally, the students are asked to read a text in which various weather metaphors occur (e.g. “sunny disposition”, “shower with presents”, “gales of laughter”, “thunder” (as a verb), “storm out of a room”, “thunderstruck”, “thunderous applause”, “storm of protest”). They have to find the weather metaphors and say what they think they mean. We will then go through the metaphors to make sure they are comfortable with them before asking them to use them in their own invented stories.

Two things need to be said about this sequence:

- Firstly, when we stray into metaphorical and idiomatic usage of any kind, the language we teach is often specific to a particular variety of English (in this case British English), and so we will have to decide how genuinely useful it is for our students to learn.
- But secondly and more importantly in the context of approaches to vocabulary teaching and learning, the whole sequence has involved students in doing much of the study themselves, without having to be told and taught by us – although we will, of course, confirm the students’ right choices, and make sure they are using the words and phrases correctly.

5.2. VOCABULARY ACTIVITY

According to Nation (1990), the two most commonly used ways of investigating vocabulary size involve the use of a dictionary or a frequency count. In the dictionary method, the investigator randomly chooses words from the dictionary. One method would be to choose the second word on every tenth page of the dictionary, depending, of course, on how many words were needed for the test. The learners are tested on these words. Various types of tests could be used with second language learners –for example:

✓ Multiple choice tests

- a tome*
1. a rough split
 2. a pain in the back
 3. a large, heavy book
 4. a type of horse

✓ Translation tests

A tome _____

✓ Instead of the tested word appearing alone, it could be put into a simple nondefining context:

It is a tome _____

In such a test it is important to use the biggest dictionary possible.

According to McCarthy & O'Dell (2001), there are many different topics to organize new words to be learned. For example a number of words in English have originated the names of people:

- ✓ *boycott*: (refuse to deal with or a refusal to deal with) a landlord in Ireland who made himself unpopular by his treatment of his tenants and was socially isolated.
- ✓ *braille*: (name of raised writing system and used by blind people) from the name of its French inventor, Louis Braille.
- ✓ *chauvinist*: (strong belief that your country, race, or group is superior to others) after the Frenchman, Nicolas Chauvin, who was fanatically devoted to Napoleon.

- ✓ *machiavellian*: (cunning, deceitful, unscrupulous in the pursuit of a goal) from Niccolo Machiavelli, the Italian statesman who died in 1527.
- ✓ *nicotine*: (chemical present in tobacco) from the 16th century French diplomat, Jean Nicot, who introduced tobacco to France.

A number of other words in English come from place names:

- ✓ *bedlam*: (chaos) from the name of a famous London mental hospital once situated where Liverpool Street Station now stands.
- ✓ *hamburger*: (famous American ground beef sandwich) named after the city Hamburg, Germany.
- ✓ *spartan*: (severely simple) from the ancient Greek city of Sparta, famed for its austerity and discipline.
- ✓ *gypsy*: (member of a particular group of traveling people) from people who were once thought to have come from Egypt.

These are only some examples of words with interesting origins. We can teach new vocabulary telling our students every story behind every new word, and after that we can make an activity using those new words. For example, they have to list the words in two columns, grouping them correctly:

INVENTIONS

braille

POLITICS

chauvinist

6. DIFFERENT WAYS OF LEARNING

According to Jack Richards and Willy A. Renandya (2002), there are three approaches to vocabulary instruction and learning:

1. Incidental learning of vocabulary requires that teachers provide opportunities for extensive reading and listening.
2. Explicit instruction involves diagnosing the words learners need to know, presenting words for the first time, elaborating word knowledge, and developing fluency with known words.
3. Independent strategy development involves practicing guessing from context and training learners to use dictionaries.

Although all of these approaches and principles have a role to play in vocabulary instruction, the learners' proficiency level and learning situation should be considered when deciding the relative emphasis to be placed on each approach. In general, emphasizing explicit instruction is probably best for beginning and intermediate students who have limited vocabularies. On the other hand, extensive reading and listening might receive more attention for more proficient intermediate and advanced students. These approaches are presented as seven teaching principles.

6.1. INCIDENTAL LEARNING

6.1.2. *Principle 1: Provide opportunities for the incidental learning of vocabulary*

In the long run, most words in both first and second languages are probably learned incidentally, through extensive reading and listening. Several studies have confirmed that incidental L2 vocabulary learning through reading does occur. Although most research concentrates on reading, extensive listening can also increase vocabulary learning. For native speakers of English learning vocabulary from context is a gradual process. Likewise, L2 learners can be expected to require many exposures to a word in context to understand its meaning.

The incidental learning of vocabulary through extensive reading can benefit language curricula and learners at all levels. According to Coady (1997), the role of graded readers is to

build up the students' vocabulary and structures until they can graduate to more authentic materials. Many students may never have done extensive reading for pleasure, so it may be initially useful to devote some class time to Sustained Silent Reading (SSR). Once students develop the ability to read in a sustained way, then most of the reading should be done outside class.

6.2. EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION

6.2.1. *Principle 2: Diagnose which of the 3,000 most common words learners need to study*

Knowing approximately 3,000 high-frequency and general academic words is significant because this amount covers a high percentage of the words on an average page.

6.2.2. *Principle 3: provide opportunities for the intentional learning of vocabulary*

The incidental learning of vocabulary may eventually account for a majority of an advanced learners' vocabulary; however intentional learning through instruction also significantly contributes to vocabulary development. Explicit instruction is essential for beginning students whose lack of vocabulary limits their reading ability. It is wonderful how beginners can learn enough words to learn vocabulary through extensive reading when they do not know enough words to read well. They get it by studying the 3,000 most frequent words until the words' form and meaning become automatically recognized (i.e. "sight vocabulary"). The first stage in teaching these 3,000 words commonly begins with word pairs in which an L2 word is matched with an L1 translation.

Vocabulary lists can be an effective way to quickly learn word-pair translations. However, it is more effective to use vocabulary cards because learners can control the order in which they study the words. Also, additional information can easily be added to the cards.

6.2.3. Principle 4: provide opportunities for elaborating word knowledge

Simply knowing translations for L2 words does not guarantee that they will be successfully accessed for use in an L2 context, because knowing a word means knowing more than just its translated meaning or its L2 synonyms. There are various aspects of word knowledge such as knowing related grammatical patterns, affixes, common lexical sets, typical associations, how to use the word receptively and productively, and so on. Receptive knowledge means being able to recognize one of the aspects of knowledge through reading and listening, and productive knowledge means being able to use it in speaking and writing. Teachers should be selective when deciding which words deserve deeper receptive and/or productive practice, as well as which types of knowledge will be most useful for their students.

Elaboration involves expanding then connections between what the learners already know and new information. One way to do this is to choose L2 words from the surrounding context and to explain their connections to the recently learned word. In addition to presenting this new information, teachers should create opportunities to meet these useful, recently learned words in new contexts that provide new collocations and associations. Exercises that can deepen students' knowledge of words include the following:

- Sorting lists of words and deciding on the categories
- Making semantic maps with lists either provided by the teacher or generated by the learners
- Generating derivatives, inflections, synonyms, and antonyms of a word
- Making trees that show the relationships between superordinates, coordinates, and specific examples
- Identifying or generating associated words
- Combining phrases from several columns
- Matching parts of collocations using two columns
- Completing collocations as a cloze activity
- Playing collocation crossword puzzles or bingo

6.2.4. *Principle 5: provide opportunities for developing fluency with known vocabulary*

Fluency-building activities recycle known words in familiar grammatical and organizational patterns so that students can focus on recognizing or using words without hesitation. Developing fluency overlaps most of all with developing the skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, so giving learners many opportunities to practice these skills is essential.

Fluency partly depends on developing sight vocabulary through extensive reading and studying high-frequency vocabulary. Fluency exercises include timed and paced readings.

6.3. INDEPENDENT STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

6.3.1. *Principle 6: experiment with guessing from context*

Guessing from context is a complex and often difficult strategy to carry out successfully. To guess successfully from context, learners need to know about 10 out of every 20 words (95%) of a text, which requires knowing the 3,000 most common words. Even if one knows these words, however, unless the context is very constrained, which is a relatively rare occurrence, or unless there is a relationship with a known word identifiable on the basis of form and supported by context, there is little chance of guessing the correct meaning, because guessing from context fails to direct attention to word form and meaning, relatively little learning occurs.

Although this strategy often may not result in gaining a full understanding of word meaning and form, guessing from context may still contribute to vocabulary learning. Just what is and is not learned will partly depend on text difficulty as well as the learners' level. More proficient learners using texts that are not overly difficult can be expected to use this strategy more effectively than low proficiency learners. It should be remembered that learning vocabulary also includes learning about collocations, associations, and related grammatical patterns as well as meaning. Therefore, if regularly practiced, this strategy may contribute to deeper word knowledge for advanced learners as long as they pay attention to the word and its context.

However, given the continuing debate about the effectiveness of guessing from context, teachers and learners should experiment with this strategy and compare it to dictionary training. Guessing from context is initially time-consuming and is more likely to work for more proficient learners. A procedure for guessing from context begins with deciding whether

the word is important enough (e.g., is part of an important and/or is repeated often) to warrant going through the subsequent steps. This decision is itself a skill that requires practice and experience. Teachers can assist learners by marking words which learners should try to infer before using other sources, as well as by providing glosses. Once learners decide that a word is worth guessing, they might follow a five-step procedure such as that of Nation and Coady (1988):

1. Determine the part of speech of the unknown word.
2. Look at the immediate context and simplify it if necessary.
3. Look at the wider context. This entails examining the clause with the unknown word and its relationship to the surrounding clauses and sentences.
4. Guess the meaning of the unknown word.
5. Check that the guess is correct

6.3.2. *Principle 7: examine different types of dictionaries and teach students how to use them*

Bilingual dictionaries have been found to result in vocabulary learning. Compared to incidental learning, repeated exposure to words combined with marginal glosses or bilingual dictionary use leads to increased learning for advanced learners. A bilingual dictionary may be much more likely to help lower-proficiency learners in reading comprehension because their lack of vocabulary can be a significant factor in their inability to read.

Bilingualized dictionaries may have some advantages over traditional bilingual or monolingual dictionaries. Bilingualized dictionaries essentially do the job of both a bilingual and a monolingual dictionary. Whereas bilingual dictionaries usually provide just an L1 synonym, bilingualized dictionaries include L2 definitions, L2 sentence examples, as well as L1 synonyms. Bilingualized dictionaries were found to result in better comprehension of new words than either bilingual or monolingual dictionaries. A further advantage is that they can be used by all levels of learners: Advanced students can concentrate on the English part of the entry, and beginners can use the translation.

Electronic dictionaries with multimedia annotations offer a further option for teachers and learners. A study of American university students learning German found that unfamiliar words were most efficiently learned when both pictures and text were available for students. This was more effective than text alone or combining text and video, possibly because

learners can control the length of time spent viewing the pictures. Computerized entries are easier to use than traditional dictionaries so students will be more likely to use them.

Finally, training in the use of dictionaries is essential. Unfortunately, in most classrooms, very little time is provided for training in dictionary use. In addition to learning the symbols and what information a dictionary can and cannot offer, learners may need extra practice for words with many entries. Furthermore, learners need to be taught to use all the information in an entry before making conclusions about meaning of a word. The learners' attention should also be directed toward the value of good sentence examples which provide collocational, grammatical, and pragmatic information about words. Finally, teachers should emphasize the importance of checking a word's original context carefully and comparing this to the entry chosen, because context determines which sense of a word is being used.

7. BEST PRACTICE IN VOCABULARY TEACHING AND LEARNING

Research on second language acquisition can be interpreted to show that a well-balanced language course should contain four major strands: meaning-focused input, meaning-focused output, fluency development and language-focused instruction. The inclusion of a language-focused instruction strand is not a reaction to communicative approaches but is the result of research findings that courses that contain such a strand are likely to achieve better results than courses that do not contain such a strand. For most second language learners, language-focused vocabulary instruction is an *essential* part of a language course.

7.1. VOCABULARY AND MEANING-FOCUSED INPUT

Reading has long been as a major source of vocabulary growth. Research indicates that, for several reasons, there is a fragility to this kind of learning.

- First, research with native speakers of English shows that the amount of vocabulary learning that occurs during the reading of a text is rather small. It is necessary to use sensitive tests of vocabulary knowledge to show any learning at all. However, it is likely to be cumulative if there are repeated opportunities to meet the partially learned vocabulary again. This suggests that there will be a close relationship between vocabulary growth and the amount and variety of meaning-focused input. Frequency counts show us that there is a very rapid drop-off in frequency of occurrence of

vocabulary after the most frequent 2,000 to 3,000 high-frequency words of the language. Clearly, beyond the most frequent words of the language, considerable meaning-focused input is needed for vocabulary growth to continue at a reasonable pace.

- The second reason why vocabulary learning through meaning-focused input is fragile is that it depends heavily on the quality of the learners' control of the reading skill. For native speakers there is little vocabulary growth through reading while learners gain control of the skill of reading. For native speakers of English, this takes several years. Once this skill is developed, reading can then become a major means of vocabulary growth. Nonnative speakers are in a different situation, but with similar results. Adult learners of another language may already be fluent readers of their first language. One of the major barriers to reading in the second language is vocabulary size.
- The third reason why vocabulary learning through meaning-focused input is fragile is that the type of reading that is done will strongly influence vocabulary learning. If learners read in familiar areas where they bring a lot of relevant background knowledge to their reading, they will easily cope with unknown words in context, but they will probably not learn them. If they read in unfamiliar areas, there is greater chance of learning new vocabulary because they have to pay close attention to the language of the text to get the meaning.

Research in another area of meaning-focused input supports the value of giving attention to the language as a system and not just as messages. Studies of vocabulary learning through listening to stories show that if the teacher briefly interrupts the story to comment on the meaning of a word, or to put it on the chalkboard, the learning of those items increases significantly. This shows that deliberately drawing attention to language items as a part of the language system (language-focused instruction) makes learning more certain. Relying on meaning-focused input alone is leaving too much to chance.

This examination of the fragility of vocabulary learning through meaning-focused input is not intended to show that such learning is not worthwhile. Vocabulary learning through reading and listening is an essential strand of a language course. Best practice in vocabulary teaching and learning should aim to reduce this fragility by providing large quantities of suitably graded input, by providing it across a range of genres and topics, and by providing language-

focused activities to support it. This will ensure that the learning condition of noticing will occur.

7.2. VOCABULARY AND MEANING-FOCUSED OUTPUT

It may seem a little strange to see meaning-focused speaking and writing as ways of expanding learners' vocabulary, but the most exciting findings of recent research on vocabulary learning have revealed how spoken production of vocabulary items helps learning and how teachers and course designers can influence this spoken production. The main findings of this research into spoken communicative activities are as follows:

- The written input to a communicative task has a major effect on what vocabulary is used and negotiated during the task. All of the vocabulary negotiated in the ranking and problem-solving tasks is in the written task sheet handed out to the learners. In the retelling task, vocabulary from the written text is produced during the retelling even when the written text could not be consulted and some of the vocabulary items were previously unknown.
- Negotiation of the meaning of unknown vocabulary meant that words had a greater chance of being learned. However, because much more previously unknown vocabulary was used and not negotiated, quantitatively more vocabulary was learned through being used productively or receptively.
- The quality of learning depends on the quality of use of the previously unknown vocabulary during the communicative task. The more the vocabulary is observed or used in contexts which differ from its occurrence in the written input, the better is learned.
- Learners are able to provide useful information to each other on most of the vocabulary in a typical communicative task; that is, if someone in a group does not know a particular word, there is likely to be someone else in the group who knows something useful about it and who can communicate this information effectively.
- Learners who actively negotiate the meaning of unknown words do not seem to learn more than learners who observe the negotiation.

- Only a small amount of the negotiation in a communicative task (about 6%) is negotiation of word meaning. The other kinds of negotiation include negotiation of procedure, negotiation of comprehension, negotiation of mishearing, and so on.
- Research on learning from negotiation needs to be careful about distinguishing what is negotiated.

The significance of these findings for vocabulary learning is that by carefully designing and monitoring the use of the handout sheets for spoken tasks, teachers can have a major influence on determining what vocabulary could be learned from such tasks, and how well it is learned.

There is no research on how tasks involving written production can result in vocabulary learning. It is not difficult to imagine that writing requiring the synthesis of information from several related sources could provide very favorable conditions for learning from input and strengthening this learning through generative use in written output.

7.3. DEVELOPING FLUENCY WITH VOCABULARY

Here “fluency” means making the best use of what you already know, and fluency development tasks have the characteristics of involving no new language items, dealing with largely familiar content and discourse types, including some kinds of preparation or repetition so that speed and smoothness of delivery can improve, and involving some kind of encouragement to perform at a faster than normal level of use. Fluency tasks are typically meaning-focused tasks.

There are some vocabulary items that need to be learned to a very high degree of fluency as quickly as possible. These include numbers, polite formulas, items for controlling language use (for example, to ask someone to repeat, speak more slowly and so on), times, and periods of time and quantities. In addition to this, it is important that all high-frequency vocabulary be learned to a reasonable degree of fluency so that it can be readily accessed when it is needed.

The following learning conditions favor the development of fluency:

- The demands of the task are largely within the experience of the learners, that is, the learners are working with known language items, familiar ideas, and familiar tasks. Fluency activities should not involve unfamiliar vocabulary.

- The learners' focus is on the message.
- The learners are encouraged to reach a higher than usual level of performance, through the use of repetition, time pressure, and planning and preparation.

Repetition and focus on the message may work against each other –the more something is repeated, the less likely it will continue to be seen as a message-focused activity. The teaching methodology solution to this is to balance the ease provided by the repetition against a challenge provided by new but similar material, reducing time, a new audience, and increasing complexity. Initially, activities such as number dictation, prepared talks, interviews, and questionnaires would be most suitable. Later activities could include retelling tasks.

7.4. VOCABULARY AND LANGUAGE-FOCUSED INSTRUCTION

Language-focused instruction occurs when learners direct their attention to language items not for producing or comprehending a particular message, but for gaining knowledge about the item as a part of the language system. Language-focused instruction thus includes focusing on the pronunciation and spelling of words; deliberately learning the meanings of a word; memorizing collocations, phrases and sentences containing a word; and being corrected for incorrect use of a word.

Negotiation of vocabulary is also a kind of language-focused instruction if it involves discussing the word's spelling or pronunciation, or giving an explanation of its meaning.

Language-focused instruction can affect implicit knowledge of a language in several ways. If knowing the word is not dependent on a developmental sequence of knowledge, then language-focused instruction on each word can add directly to both implicit knowledge and explicit knowledge. Some concepts –for example, family relationships- are probably acquired developmentally, and language-focused instruction may have no effect if the learners are not at an appropriate stage of conceptual development. It is not known what other learning conditions apply for language-focused instruction on vocabulary to directly affect implicit knowledge, but it seems likely that only some learning of vocabulary items that are not affected by a developmental sequence directly enters implicit knowledge.

A second effect of language-focused instruction is that it can raise learners' consciousness or awareness of particular items so that they are then more readily noticed when they occur in

meaning-focused input. The causal chain is (1) language-focused instruction, (2) explicit knowledge about a word, (3) increased awareness of the word, (4) noticing of the word in meaning-focused input, and (5) implicit knowledge of the word. The quality of the language-focused instruction will determine how readily a word is noticed and what aspects of the word are noticed.

A third effect of language-focused instruction is similarly indirect: (1) language-focused instruction, (2) explicit knowledge, (3) output constructed from the explicit knowledge (that is, the word is used in a consciously constructed sentence), (4) the output acting as meaning-focused input to the same learner, and (5) implicit knowledge of the word.

What kinds of language-focused vocabulary instruction are likely to be of benefit? The following list is ranked in order of importance. Each suggestion is matched with its likely effect on implicit knowledge.

1. GUESSING UNKNOWN WORDS FROM CONTEXT

Although this may seem to be a meaning-focused activity, at least in the early stages of the development of the guessing skill, it involves learners consciously focusing on unknown words, interrupting their normal reading, and systematically drawing on the available clues to work out the unknown word's meaning.

2. LEARNING THE MEANINGS OF UNKNOWN WORDS

There is an assumption in much that is written about vocabulary learning that all vocabulary learning should be in context. This assumption is not supported by research and by what successful learners do. The deliberate learning of vocabulary may contribute directly to implicit knowledge if the words learned are not complicated and if the learning is meaningful. At the very least, the results of deliberate learning will be available for language-focused use, which may then indirectly contribute to implicit knowledge through production or through making meaning-focused input meaningful. There is a lack of research on the effect of deliberate vocabulary learning on meaning-focused use.

3. STUDY OF WORD PARTS AND MNEMONIC DEVICES

The majority of words in English come from French, Latin, or Greek and the majority of these have word parts, particularly prefixes and suffixes, which occur in many words. Knowledge of these word parts can be used to improve the learning of many

words through relating unknown word forms and meanings to known word parts. This is similar to the effect of mnemonic devices on vocabulary learning, the best researched of which is the keyword technique.

The effect of such learning is probably to add to explicit knowledge. This will contribute to implicit knowledge receptively because it is a very strong form of consciousness-raising, and productively through the deliberate production of meaning-focused output.

A well thought-out vocabulary component of a course would be largely indistinguishable from the listening, speaking, reading, and writing parts of the language program. The main differences would lie in the language-focused learning and in the deliberate planning and manipulation of the written input to listening, speaking, reading, and writing activities to provide optimal conditions for vocabulary growth.

8. APPLICATIONS OF A NOTIONAL SYLLABUS

According to D.A. Wilkins (1983), a notional approach to syllabus design represents a strategy in the structuring of language learning that contrasts with the more common grammatical structuring. The potential of the notional syllabus as a structure for language teaching is obviously still largely unexplored. There is, therefore, all the more need for some discussion of the way in which it might be operated and of the pedagogic implications that it seems to carry.

8.1. THE FORMS OF A NOTIONAL SYLLABUS

The essence of a notional syllabus will be in the priority it gives to the semantic content of language learning. The first step in the construction of any language syllabus or course is to define objectives. Wherever possible these will be based on an analysis of the needs of the learners and these needs will be expressed in terms of the particular types of communication in which the learner will need to engage. One cannot predict the actual forms of sentences that people will need to produce, but this does not prevent one from arming the learner with a knowledge of the general rules of the grammatical system so that he can create the sentences (types of meaning are expressed) so that he can then adapt and combine the different

components of this knowledge according to the requirements of a particular act of communication.

The principal difficulty in applying a notional approach stems from the fact that there is no one-to-one relation between grammatical forms and either grammatical meanings (conceptual meaning) or language functions. Exactly the same problem inevitably arises in a grammatical approach, but in that case it is rarely recognized. Where semantic-grammatical and modal meanings are concerned, there is, in English, no single realization for such notions as *future time*, *agent* or *possibility*. Any logical set of spatial relationships can only with difficulty be mapped on to the linguistic forms (e.g. prepositions) that actually express the relationships. However the lack of congruence between form and meaning is most striking in the case of functional meaning, that is, in the use of sentences as utterances in actual acts of speech. An individual sentence can be used to perform virtually any function in the language and consequently any function may take a variety of forms.

8.2. GLOBAL COURSE DESIGN

The acquisition of the grammatical system of a language remains a most important element in language learning. The grammar is the means through which linguistic creativity is ultimately achieved and an inadequate knowledge of the grammar would lead to a serious limitation on the capacity for communication. A notional syllabus, no less than a grammatical syllabus, must seek to ensure that the grammatical system is properly assimilated by the learner. We do not express language functions in isolation.

8.3. LEXICAL CONTENT

The principal concern in this discussion of syllabus design has been to discover the most effective ways in which the functional and grammatical aspects of linguistic competence can be developed. In a grammatical syllabus the lexical content is determined according to a variety of criteria of which frequency is perhaps the most important. In a notional syllabus, while concepts of frequency are not irrelevant, there are other sources from which vocabulary will in the first place be derived.

To a certain, though limited, extent the semantic-grammatical categories themselves have implications for the lexical content. Concepts of time, quantity and space cannot be expressed

without an appropriate lexicon. Communicating emotional reactions too may involve drawing on a certain set of lexical items. In general, however, the categories of communicative function do not so much demand a specific lexical content as operate on a lexicon determined by other factors.

One of these factors will be the situation of language use. We saw above that a function is only realized in a specific context and indeed would only be taught in a specific context. That context may well be a *situational* context and, in that case, the lexical content taught will be situations of language use into account and in doing so it goes part of the way towards defining the lexical content of learning. The context, however, may be *linguistic* as much as situational and, in this case, the exact form of an utterance will be dependent on the general semantic orientation of the text in which it occurs. Words can be drawn up into semantically related sets. To put it another way, the lexical content of utterances is often a matter of the *topics* being talked about. If the topic is itself associated with the physical setting, the lexical need has already been predicted from the situational analysis; but, more often than not, there is no particular relationship between the setting in which language is produced and the topic which is being talked or written about.

The lexical content of learning, therefore, can be largely derived from an analysis of the topics likely to occur in the language use of a given group. In the case of specialized language learners the topics obviously derive from the field of specialization; in the case of non-specialized learners it is probably necessary to establish a number of themes around which semantically related items can be grouped and from which in constructing a notional syllabus an appropriate selection can be made. Such an approach to specifying the lexical content is obviously very much in keeping with the general philosophy of the notional syllabus with its emphasis on the content and purpose of language communication.

To give an idea of what is meant here by *topic*, it might be worth-while giving an example. The topics below have been used in the specification of learning content for beginners in the context of adult language learners (Secondary School students):

- a) personal identification
- b) house and home
- c) trade, profession, occupation
- d) free time, entertainment

- e) travel
- f) relations with other people
- g) health and welfare
- h) education
- i) shopping
- j) food and drink
- k) services
- l) places
- m) weather

This list was produced for use in a given context. It is not exhaustive, nor would it necessarily be appropriate in other contexts.

8.4. SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PROCESS OF TEACHING

Both in teaching and in evaluating our students, we need to adopt procedures that are congruent with what we regard as the proper objectives of language teaching. In proposing that the semantic dimension should be given the highest priority in syllabus design, we are implying that the success of our teaching should be judged by whether or not our pupils are able to communicate meanings appropriately. To ensure that this is so, we need to introduce new forms of language learning materials and we need to have at our disposal new techniques of assessment.

8.5. TEACHING MATERIALS: THE USE OF AUTHENTIC MATERIALS

The needs of the receiver will lead us to consideration of the place of *authentic language materials*; the interactional nature of much communication will lead us to emphasize the place of *role-playing*.

By talking so far principally in terms of the predicted content and purpose of the learner's own utterances, we have concentrated on the learner as a potential *producer* of language. However, any discussion of verbal interaction implies comprehension as well as production of language, and it would therefore be wrong to give the impression that syllabus planning is

planning for production only. By focusing on the receiver we are obliged to consider the content and purpose, not only of the utterances he may produce, but of those he may hear or read.

In a context where we are emphasizing the communicative purpose of language and the immediate usefulness of the language being learned, the acquisition of comprehension skill poses a particular problem. Whereas the individual is the master of what he himself chooses to say, he can exercise no comparable control over the language he hears. If the language is to be encountered only in the classroom, this presents no great difficulty, since the teacher can control both the language that the pupil produces and the language that he hears. Conventionally this control is exercised in such a way that the pupil hears diverse and complex language forms only in the later stages of learning. However, the essence of the semantic approach is that we do envisage the possibility of immediate language use. This in turn means that the learner will have to try to understand far more varied forms of language than he is capable of producing himself. We cannot normally afford to give the learner a receptive repertoire that is as limited as his productive repertoire will be.

In some ways this is merely a new form of a familiar issue. Learners who have followed conventional language courses and who may have developed a considerable classroom competence find that when they come into contact with native speakers of the language, they meet serious problems in comprehension. They may be able to perform adequately themselves in speech, but they frequently cannot understand what native speakers say to them. The fact is that they are not accustomed to hearing (or reading) the language as it is produced by native speakers for native speakers.

This suggests that in language courses generally, but in courses based on a notional syllabus in particular, much more attention needs to be paid to the acquisition of a receptive competence and that an important feature of materials designed to produce such a competence would be authentic language materials. By this is meant materials which have not been specially written or recorded for the foreign learner, but which were originally directed at a native-speaking audience. Such materials need not even be edited, in the sense that linguistically difficult sections would not be deleted, although the linguistic content of such texts could well be exploited in various ways. The importance of incorporating such materials into courses is that they will provide the only opportunity that the learner will have to see the contrast between the somewhat idealized language that he is acquiring and the apparently deficient forms that people actually use, to meet the forms of language current in speech and

to develop the ability to understand language that he will never need to produce. In short, such materials will be the means by which he can bridge the gap between classroom knowledge and an effective capacity to participate in real language events.

8.6. TESTING

The process of evaluation in language teaching is closely related to objectives. We test a learner's language skill in order both to establish what he knows (or what he can do) and to assess how successful we have been in our teaching in adding to his linguistic achievement. The tests involved would inevitably be largely tests of integrated rather than isolated skills. They would also be tests of language performance. The problems of testing actual performance are well known. In the context of a notional syllabus it means that we will be seeking the answer to the question of whether the learner can express such things as concepts of time, spatial relationships, possibilities, intentions, promises, forgiveness, prohibitions, affirmations, conjectures, surprise, solicitude – indeed any of the sub-categories that are proposed for the notional syllabus. At the moment, we do not know how to obtain the answers to such questions. We do not know how to establish the communicative proficiency of the learner. It should not be inferred from this that a notional syllabus cannot operate until the problem of testing is resolved. It would be a strange set of priorities that limited a teaching program to what we were able to test effectively. But the forms of testing do have considerable influence on the manner and the content of language teaching and it is important that while some people are experimenting with the notional syllabus as such, others should be attempting to develop the new testing techniques that should, ideally, accompany it. Indeed, such techniques would be a valuable contribution to language testing whether or not the proposals here for a notional syllabus come to be widely accepted.

9. CONCLUSIONS

Learning vocabulary through incidental, intentional, and independent approaches requires teachers to plan a wide variety of activities and exercises. The amount of emphasis that teachers and programs decide to place on any given activity will depend on the learners' level and the educational goals of the teacher and the program. In general, it makes most sense to emphasize the direct teaching of vocabulary for learners who still need to learn the first 3,000 most common words. As learners' vocabulary expands in size and depth, extensive reading

and independent strategies may be increasingly emphasized. Extensive reading and listening, translation, elaboration, fluency activities, guessing from context, and using dictionaries all have a role to play in systematically developing the learners' vocabulary knowledge.

In order to decide which vocabulary learning strategies to recommend to our students, we need to consider the overall learning context. The effectiveness with which learning strategies can be both taught and used will depend on a number of variables, including the proficiency level, L1 and culture of students, their motivation and purposes for learning the L2, the text and task being used, and the nature of the L2 itself. It is important to gain cooperation of the learners, because a study has shown that students who resisted strategy training learned worse than those who relied on their familiar rote repetition approach.

It seems that learners do use strategies and find them helpful. This suggests that we should incorporate strategy training in our classes, but it raises the question of how effective such training is. Research is inconclusive on this point: some studies report a reasonable degree of success, whereas others report only limited success, or even student resistance.

CONCLUSIONES

El aprendizaje de vocabulario a través del enfoque incidental, intencional o independiente, requiere que los profesores hagan un plan con gran variedad de actividades y ejercicios. La cantidad de énfasis que los profesores y programas pongan en una actividad dependerá del nivel de los estudiantes y los fines educativos del profesor y del programa. En general, tiene más sentido enfatizar la enseñanza directa de vocabulario para los estudiantes que todavía necesitan aprender las primeras 3,000 palabras más comunes. Cuando el vocabulario de los estudiantes se vaya expandiendo, la lectura extensiva y las estrategias independientes pueden ir enfatizándose más. La lectura extensiva, las actividades de "listening", traducción, y elaboración, las actividades de fluidez, imaginar por el contexto, y el uso de diccionarios juegan un papel importante en el desarrollo del conocimiento del vocabulario de los estudiantes.

Para decidir qué estrategia de aprendizaje de vocabulario recomendar a nuestros estudiantes, tenemos que considerar todo el contexto de aprendizaje. La efectividad con la que las estrategias de aprendizaje pueden ser enseñadas y usadas dependerá de diversas variables, incluyendo el nivel de competencia, la lengua materna y la cultura de los estudiantes, su motivación y propósitos para aprender la segunda lengua, y la naturaleza de la segunda lengua

en sí misma. Es importante ganarse la cooperación de los estudiantes, porque un estudio ha demostrado que los alumnos que se resistieron a la estrategia de entrenamiento aprendieron peor que aquellos que confiaron en el enfoque de repetición familiar de memoria.

Parece que los estudiantes utilizan estrategias y las encuentran útiles. Esto nos sugiere que deberíamos incorporar estrategias de aprendizaje en nuestras clases. La cuestión es qué estrategias son más efectivas. La investigación sobre dicha materia es concluyente en este punto: algunos estudios apuntan un grado razonable de éxito en el uso de estrategias, mientras otros apuntan sólo a un éxito limitado, o incluso a una cierta resistencia por parte del estudiante.

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