

Play-way Methods to Improve Vocabulary

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Abstract

This paper focuses on improving vocabulary using play-way methods.

Key words: Vocabulary, Play-way, Stories, Aantakshari, Idioms, Phrases

Importance of the Mastery of Words

Everybody wishes to have a strong vocabulary and also to have a treasure of idioms and phrases to convey the information accurately and to express the emotions effectively. Rich vocabulary helps the speaker or the writer to create a good impression about his/her word power. However, many speakers and writers fail to impress their listeners and readers because of their lack of proper and effective use of words. Hence inadequate vocabulary proves to be a serious handicap for such people. Even good speakers may reach a plateau due to inadequate vocabulary. Hence one should be extremely conscious regarding the use of proper words, idioms and phrases in proper contexts because an exact and extensive vocabulary is an important tool for success.

Good communicators and learners always crave to learn new words, their meanings, their multiple uses, pronunciation, spelling, parts of speech and appearance in the sentence.

Conventional Ways to Improve Vocabulary Skill

There are many conventional ways of improving vocabulary like the following:

- To learn a word daily from dictionary
- To read English newspaper/magazine/books regularly
- To write a paragraph using a newly learned word or words
- To talk in English with some non-living objects to practice sentence construction and vocabulary skills

Greater Effectiveness through New Methods

The above mentioned traditional methods of improving vocabulary are no doubt very useful but a learner soon loses interest as these methods are time consuming. These methods do not generate much enthusiasm and are usually monotonous assignments. New interest in learning vocabulary may be generated through play-way methods to improve the acquisition and mastery of vocabulary.

One such method is through reading and telling stories. As a learning tool, stories can encourage learners to explore their unique expressiveness and can heighten a student's ability to communicate thoughts and feelings in an articulate and lucid manner and indirectly can help them to learn new words.

Using Stories to Improve Vocabulary

Stories can be a nurturing way of improving vocabulary. This activity can be practiced in the classroom as follows:

The teacher should divide the students in groups of four, five or six. Then she can provide them a story using simple language in hard copy. Students can be told to change some words of the story and replace them with new words or phrases without changing the meaning and theme of the story. The words that would be replaced words should be uncommon, rich, appealing and sophisticated. It may be possible that in a particular group one or two students are capable of changing the story with new words or phrases. These new words and phrases will now be learnt by the remaining students of that group.

After making lots of changes in the story any one member of the group can be told to narrate the new story which will be heard by the whole class. Another member of the same group may be told to explain the meaning of the new words used by them in the story. In this way each group can be told to follow this method and thus we can have a number of new words and phrases to learn.

This method was used in the real classroom where the popular story of the Tortoise and the Hare was given by the teacher to students in simple language.

The Tortoise and the Hare

Once upon a time a tortoise and a hare had an argument about who was faster. They decided to settle the argument with a race. They agreed on a route and started off the race. Soon the hare was ahead of the tortoise. Seeing that he was far ahead of the tortoise, the hare thought of relaxing for some time. Soon he fell asleep. The tortoise continued and overtook him and soon won the race. The hare woke up and realized that he had lost the race. The moral of the story is that the slow and steady (people) win the race.

The students worked in group and changed the given story with some new words as follows.

There was a **boastful overweening** hare in a forest who **bragged about** how fast he could run. Tired of hearing him boast, the tortoise argued with him and challenged him. They decided to settle the **squabble** with a race. All the animals in the forest **assembled** to witness the race. They saw **eye to eye** on a route and started off the race. The hare started with a **jet like speed** and left the tortoise much behind. Then not finding the tortoise within his **range of vision**, he decided to have a **catnap**. Soon he was **in the arms of Morpheus**. The tortoise **plodded on** looking straight ahead. He went past him and soon finished the race, emerging as the **undisputed champ**. Hearing the shouts and cheers of the spectators, the hare woke up and was **bamboozled** to know about the **triumphant** tortoise. He was **remorseful and conscience-stricken**. He reminded himself forever, “Don’t **brag about your lightning pace**, for slow and steady wins the race.”

Learning Idioms and Phrases

In similar fashion, idioms and phrases can also be learnt by play-way method. This play-way method of teaching and learning idioms and phrases is through the game of *Aantakshari*. The teacher can tell the students to first find as many idioms and phrases as possible on certain topics such as parts of body, animals, colours, numbers or the commonly used idioms and phrases using books, dictionary or the Internet.

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Examples

Idioms/Phrases based on Parts of Body

1. Hair-breadth escape
2. Head of the family
3. Under the thumb of father
4. To grease the palms
5. To pay through the nose

Idioms/Phrases based on Animals

1. To rain like cats and dogs
2. Lion's share
3. White elephant
4. Dark Horse
5. Ant in pants

Idioms/Phrases based on Colours

1. Black and white
2. To born with silver spoon in mouth
3. Golden opportunity
4. To catch red-handed
5. To show pink slips

Idioms/Phrases based on Numbers

1. At sixes and sevens
2. One in hand is worth two in bushes
3. On cloud nine
4. A million dollar question
5. In the seventh heaven of delight

In this way, once the students collect minimum 10 idioms and phrases on each topic, tell the students to keep their books open. Now the teacher can tell the students to play *Aantakshari* based on idioms and phrases. The teacher will divide the students in two, three or four teams depending upon the strength of the class. The teacher can begin the play by saying a phrase or **Language in India** www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 15:3 March 2015
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idiom. The first team will pick up any one word from the idiom or phrase given by the teacher and will say another idiom using that word along with its meaning. The second team will also pick up any one word from the idiom said by the first team and will say another idiom or phrase. In this way all the teams can continue playing the game. If a particular team can't form a new idiom from the idiom spoken by the previous team, next team can be given the chance and so on. If none of the teams can answer, the teacher can help in this case. If the teacher also fails to help, in that case the teacher can give another idiom or phrase or proverb having similar, related or even far-fetched meaning.

Example

The teacher can begin the play by saying an idiom:

To bell the **cat**→ A **cat** nap→ To rain like cats and **dogs**→ Every dog has his own **day**→ A **red** letter day→ **Red**tapism→ To catch somebody red-**handed**→ A bird in **hand** is worth two in bushes→ A **golden** handshake→ A **golden** opportunity→ Everything that glitters is not **gold**→ Old is **gold**→ A golden **man**→ A **man** of letters→ **Practice** makes a man perfect→ Practice what you preach

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