Teaching Vocabulary

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Introduction

English remains the second compulsory language in the field of education in Tamilnadu and many other states in India. English is given the status of "Associate Official Language" in our Constitution. English is widely used in educated circles all over India for both business and personal communication. English is used by institutions for intra- and inter-personal communication. It is used dominantly in the private sector, large-scale and high-tech industries, particularly, those with foreign collaborations. It is widely used in various domains like mass media, industry and commerce, administration, travel and tourism, etc. It continues to be the dominant language of higher education including engineering and medicine.

Vocabulary and Word

Professor Mallikarjun (2002), (Mallikarjun 7-13; "*Vocabulary Education*" Language in India *www.languageinindia.com*) distinguishes between *vocabulary* and *word* thus:

"*Word* and *vocabulary* are the two terms that are used often as synonyms. Broadly speaking, one may not make any distinction between these two, but when it comes to the precise and technical way of handling these, the difference is evident as these are two different concepts. … the term *word* refers to an individual entity. The term *vocabulary*, however, is a term referring to a collective concept; it refers to a collection of many entities that are called words. Vocabulary refers to the total or partial stock of words that an individual or a language has. The term *word* is widely spoken about in linguistics and the term *vocabulary* in the field of education, one at the theoretical level of understanding and the other at the practical level of application."

Aims of English Language Teaching

The aims of ELT as laid down in the curriculum followed in most states are given below:

    (i)   The student should be able to understand simple written English.

            i.e., words and sentence constructions.

    (ii)   He/she should be able to understand simple Spoken English,

            i.e., intonation and stress patterns.

    (iii)   He/she should acquire the ability to speak simple correct English,

            i.e., vocabulary and proper use of English sentences.

    (iv)   He/she should acquire the ability to write simple correct English,

            i. e., selection and use of proper words and sentence constructions.

Vocabulary Acquisition

Vocabulary acquisition and mastery of the use of individual words in appropriate contexts takes time. The process in English as a second language should have begun right from the class/standard in which English is introduced as subject in our school system. Often a few words are given to master their spelling and pronunciation. Simple reference-meanings of words such as cow, rat, cat, umbrella, coconut, apple, etc. are taught in early classes. Use of these words in sentences is not seriously pursued in rural schools. If sentences with the words are introduced these will be memorized by the students. Use in sentences is a regular feature in English teaching classes in elementary and high school classes. However, students do not construct the sentences. The teacher gives dictation of sentences with the words or writes the sentences on the blackboard and students copy these and memorize.

Explicit and Implicit Learning

Two types of vocabulary learning are identified in research materials:

Explicit Vocabulary learning is more efficient than implicit vocabulary learning. N. Ellis ("www.ehow.com") identifies four main points on an explicit-implicit vocabulary-learning continuum:

1. A strong implicit-learning hypothesis holds that words are acquired largely by unconscious means.

2. A weak implicit-learning hypothesis holds that words cannot be learned without at least some noticing or consciousness that it is a new word which is being learned.

3. A weak explicit-learning hypothesis holds that learners are active processors of information and that a range of strategies are used to infer the meaning of a word, usually with reference to its context.

4. A strong explicit-learning hypothesis holds that a range of meta cognitive strategies such as planning and monitoring are necessary for vocabulary learning; in particular, the greater the depth of processing involved in the learning, the more secure and long term the learning is likely to be.

Learners' Effort

English is placed as the Second Language in our region. As most of the students are from vernacular medium schools of rural areas, they are not given any opportunity to communicate in English. Even within the class room, they prefer only their mother tongue for communication. This is due to fear of committing grammatical mistakes. This condition results in low standard of target language, English. Even the students from Tamil medium who are familiar with grammar feel difficult to form a grammatically meaningful sentence.

Newspaper Reading

Encouraging the students to read the newspaper in the class room will help the students to enhance

- their competency level

- better comprehension

- improve vocabulary

Dictionary Usage

The Oxford Dictionary (Hornby) records over 400,000 words.Even the native speakers of English use only a limited number of words in their daily life. Words used in the subjects taught in the school and college also are limited in number. In other words, none will know all the words available in a dictionary. The purpose of a dictionary is to help the users of the language to check the meaning and usage rules for the words users of the language come across in their day to day

living as well as in their chosen fields, etc. The extent of our individual vocabularies varies considerably from person to person. Using the dictionary in the class room will make the students know more words and also know how to use them and in what context. It will help the students to know more about grammar, pronunciation and stress also.

Importance of Grammar

Grammar paves the way for the students to identify the things like

- **Homophones**
- **Nouns**
- **Verbs**
- **Adjectives**
- **Adverbs**
- **´Compound Nouns**
- **Suffixes and Prefixes**
- **Prepositions**
- **Idioms and Phrases**
- **Abbreviations**

Role of Grammar in Learning Vocabulary

In multiple syllable words with identical pronunciation and spelling, when the stress falls on the first syllable it is recognized as a noun and when it falls on the on the second syllable it is recognized as a verb.

´Object (Noun)

Ob ´ject (Verb)

Sometimes an adjective comes to have the force of a noun through the omission of the substantive which it originally qualified. Thus when we speak of the principals in a play or a choir we are using principals as a noun, but actually it is all that is left of some such expression as 'the principal performers.' The list below gives an account of how words are combined and derived:

Noun	Verb	Adjective	Adverb
Anticipation	anticipated	anticipatory	-
Contradiction	contradict	contradicting	-

Prepositions

Prepositions are those words that placed before a noun phrase or sometimes before an –ing clause to form a preposition phrase. Prepositions can be used with a noun, a verb, and/or an adjective.

    With Nouns   : at a glance

    With Verbs   : comment on

    With adjectives: confused by

Compound Nouns

Compound Nouns are nouns, adjectives or verbs made of two more words or parts of words, written as one or more words, or joined by a hyphen. A few such words commonly encountered in engineering texts are listed here.

    Air supply   - supply of air

       Computer technology - technology used in computers.

Idioms and Phrases

Idioms are expressions which have a meaning that is not obvious from the individual words. For example, *to kill birds with one stone* (**"www.uwplatt.edu")** means to perform two tasks by putting in effort and resources for just one. The best way to understand an idiom is to understand it in its context. Teachers can give the students one passage and make them find out the idioms and phrases used in the passage.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 13:11 November 2013**
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Otherwise, they also can make them to find out the best options for the questions given below that passage.

By the Addition of Suffixes or Prefixes

This is a very ancient method of word formation, to be found in almost every language. The Anglo-Saxons made fairly extensive use of it, taking a simple root-word (usually a noun or an adjective) and adding a suffix to express a related idea. Prefixes and Suffixes are together known as affixes.

<div align="center">

-dom   - Kingdom

-ship   - Worship

ambi -   - ambivalent

post -   - post-war

auto-   - autobiography

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By Abbreviation

At precisely what stage of its history an abbreviation becomes recognized as word, it is easy to say: when the full form ceases to be used in ordinary writing and speech, except for special purposes. Thus, *exam* may be cited as an example, although good colloquial English has not yet receive literary recognition. The full form *examination* is still frequently heard in speech and would almost always be used in writing, though in another generation it may perhaps be considered pedantic.

Words Manufactured from Initials

In certain cases initials have become more commonly used than the actual words for which they stand, so that they can almost be regarded as words in themselves.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 13:11 November 2013**
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B.A.   – **Bachelor of Arts**

M.A.   – **Master of Arts**

Games and Puzzles

Language learning is many-sided, which need not discourage us from seeing it simply as a matter of four skills: Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. Language games can add fun and variety to communicative language teaching. They are both interesting and challenging for the learners. Games are frequently used in the language classroom to provide a light-hearted form of language practice either with relatively free use of language, or where a particular structure is being repeated.

Puzzles can be very effectively used in the English class room. The students have a lot of fun with solving the puzzles. At the same time learning also takes place. The teacher should choose only those words that are within the linguistic competence of the learners.

In the puzzle given below, all the words end in –ity, which is an ending found in many scientific words. Words read across only, not down. Note the increasing complexity of the puzzle. Students may be allowed to consult with each other or may be asked to work as a team to solve puzzles.

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C	I	T	Y										
U	N	I	T	Y									
3		I	T	Y									
4			I	T	Y								
5				I	T	Y							
6					I	T	Y						
7						I	T	Y					
8							I	T	Y				
9								I	T	Y			
10									I	T	Y		
11										I	T	Y	
12											I	T	Y

(Braddock.R.Lloyd-Jones,R.,&Sohoer.L.'s 11-16; "*Written Composition* ").

Describing Things

Making the students to describe climate, vegetation, agriculture, industry, population etc., will help them to use many words.

British English and American English

There may be difference in the meaning conveyed by certain words, between the British and American dialects of English. Also there is a difference in the way certain words are spelt in the two forms. Teaching these differences will help the students to know the pronunciation, spelling and possible meanings for a variety of words. However,

it is important to emphasize that Indian English follows the spelling and pronunciation model of the British dialect of English.

British English	American English
favour	favor
notice board	bulletin board

Words Describing Human Character and Attitudes

This type of exercise will make the students complete a word. The meanings are given on the right hand: ("www.bankokpost.com")

Word	Meaning
-xtr-v-g-nt	one who likes to live a life of luxury, one who spends lavishly
Pr-d-g--us	hugely talented especially from childhood

Homophones

A homophone is a word pronounced like another word but with a different meaning or spelling, ("www.cutewriting.blogspot.in")

e.g. Some/sum; beach/beech

Knew/new; advice/advise

Conclusion

Vocabulary teaching and learning is central to theory and practice of English Language Teaching. Words have a central place in culture. Mastery of Vocabulary helps effective communication. Through the activities mentioned in this article, students can be motivated to improve their Vocabulary.

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