

METHODS FOR TEACHING NEW WORDS IN ENGLISH

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Annotation: *It is considered very important to learn new words in the English language. This article discusses new methods of teaching new words in English for English teachers.*

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It's hard for students to read and understand a text if they don't know what the words mean. A solid vocabulary boosts reading comprehension for students of all ages. The more words students know, the better they understand the text. That's why effective vocabulary teaching is so important, especially for students who learn and think differently.

Considering the number of new words students have to learn per course, this means us teachers have our work cut out for us. We all know that although it is important for students to use correct grammar and structures, words are the main carriers of meaning. This means that the more words students are able to handle accurately, the better their chances of understanding English and making themselves understood. To effectively acquire new vocabulary, students must go through four essential stages:

- first, they notice a new word with help;
- secondly, they recognize the word at first with help;
- then later on their own;
- and lastly, they are able to both recognize and produce the word.

It is essential that you, as the teacher, make use of activities that target each of these stages; more often than not, we make the mistake of merely introducing new vocabulary, and we don't give students the opportunity to put these new words to use. We have got a lot of useful ways teaching English.

Introducing nouns, things, objects, animals. Visual elements work best with concrete nouns, but try to go beyond flashcards and illustrations. Try to use real objects whenever possible, or even sounds, smells, and tastes. Appeal to all of your students' senses!

Introducing adjectives Opposites, like "big" and "small", "long" and "short", are usually illustrated with pictures, but here's another case where realia will help you teach new adjectives; the use of real life objects is wonderful for words like "soft" and "rough", adjectives that may take precious minutes of class time to explain. For

more advanced adjectives, like “stunning”, “gorgeous”, “spectacular”, “huge”, or “immense”, bring in photos of famous sights from around the world like the Louvre, Egyptian pyramids, the Eiffel Tower, etc...then use these new adjectives to describe these places in ways that clearly illustrate their meaning.

Introducing abstracts. There are things you simply cannot teach with a flashcard. What works best in these cases are synonyms, definitions, substitutions, or simply placing students within a given context. Consider this simple example: To teach the difference between “early” and “late”, remind students what time class begins, then state that those who arrive before this time are “early” while those that arrive after this time are “late”.

Bingo. Bingo is one of the most versatile games employed by ESL teachers. For younger learners, make bingo cards with illustrations, and call out each word. For those who can read, do the opposite, make the cards with words, then draw the flashcards from a bag. For teens or adult learners, you can make cards with the definition and call out the words, or vice versa.

Matching. Another type of exercise with countless possibilities. Students may be required to match opposites, synonyms, or a word with its definition, as well as a picture to a word.

Fill in the blanks (with options). Hand out a piece of written text (anything from a description, song, letter, to even a short story) with blank spaces that must be filled in from a list of words. You can adapt this to longer texts, and also have longer word lists.

Descriptions. From a newspaper photo of a recent event to a personal account of a recent trip, there are countless things students can describe while putting new vocabulary to good use. This goes for both oral and written descriptions. You may give them some guidance, like indicating that they have to use at least five adjectives in their description, or five words related to sports, weather, etc...to no guidance at all.

Fill in the blanks (no options). Supply students with a piece of written text with blank spaces that have to be filled in with any word that fits. You may give them indications for each space, like “noun”, “adjective” or “adverb”, if they’re advanced students. You can then read several out loud to compare the different words used to fill in each blank.

Mind maps or brainstorming. Tell students they need to think of words they can use to describe the weather. Write “weather” at the center of a blackboard or whiteboard and circle it. Write every word supplied by students as “rays” that shoot out this circle. They should reply with previously taught words, like “chilly”, “scorching”, or “mild”. You may even have sub-circles shooting off to the side for winter, summer, etc...words. This works great for vocabulary review lessons.

Guess what I'm thinking. Students take turns describing something, like a place: “I’m thinking of a place that is so huge it takes visitors hours to see all of it. It has

stunning works of art. It is a breathtaking building, very old, but with a modern glass pyramid in the front.” Students choose to be as obvious or as cryptic as they like. Even little ones can do this with simple descriptions: “It’s an animal. It has a very long neck and big brown spots.” Or simply state a series of words: “Africa, black and white, stripes”.

It’s better to teach vocabulary in context, in other words, teach highly descriptive adjectives when the lesson is about travel. Or clothes and accessories when you’re talking about shopping. Never teach a list of words just because, or students won’t have a chance to practice this new vocabulary.

As a language learner, you work hard to expand your vocabulary. You plough through new words every day, make long lists of words and practise with flashcards. However, when it comes to speaking, the new words seem to fall out of your head, so you resort to your old friends – words you already know and have used many times – again and again.

Remembering and using new words in speech is often a challenge for language learners. Here are ten strategies to help you make words stick in your mind and use them in conversation.

No random words. We remember what is relevant to us. Making lists or index cards with random words is not usually an effective way to remember and use these words later. Word lists and index cards are great for revisiting vocabulary you have already learned, but to make a new word stick in your mind, try linking it with something meaningful to you. You will be more likely to remember a new word if it is used in a context you find interesting or are passionate about.

Learn in chunks and scripts. We retain words better when we learn them in small ‘chunks’ (i.e. small phrases that combine several words) and ‘scripts’ (i.e. typical dialogues). For example, instead of memorising the phrasal verb ‘to come up with’, memorise it as part of the phrase ‘to come up with an idea’. This way, you make sure that you know how to actually use this verb in at least one sentence.

Use your inner voice. Learning is essentially an internal process. To learn a word, you need to get into the world of your inner voice. Try the following: listen to a word/phrase once, now listen to it inside your head, then say it inside your head, then say it aloud. Record yourself saying it and listen to the recording.

Visualise what the word or phrase looks like. Drawing what the word means, either on paper or in your imagination, will help you recall the meaning of the word whenever you hear it. This method works well with idioms, such as ‘to keep one’s mouth shut’ (informal), meaning, ‘to not talk about something’.

Create mnemonics. Try to create a funny phrase or story that will strengthen the connection between the word and its meaning (known as a mnemonic). I find this technique especially effective when I need to recall words that are hard to spell.

Use spaced repetition. Repetition fixes new words in your memory. However, repeating them a hundred times over the course of one day will not be as effective as repeating them a few times over a period of several days or weeks (i.e., spaced repetition).

Use the new word immediately. Then try to recall it in an hour. Review it shortly before you go to bed. Use it again one day later. Finally, review it in a couple of days after that.

In short, the widespread use of new methods of word memorization in English teaching leads to a significant reduction in the time spent learning the language. Learning a language well makes it easier to speak it perfectly.

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