Developing a Systematic Approach to Vocabulary Teaching and Learning in EFL Courses

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ABSTRACT

Over the last twenty years, the role of vocabulary in language teaching has featured more prominently in EFL literature. The existence of large computer corpora has allowed linguists to learn more about how words are actually used in communication and how frequently individual words and phrases occur. Moreover, it has been pointed out that although a grammar based syllabus might allow beginner level students to function in a classroom environment, a survival level vocabulary of around 2,000 words is necessary before they can reasonably be expected to function, even on a very basic level, outside the classroom. However, despite an increased focus on vocabulary in many EFL courses and course books, this is often limited to the listing of some of the words that appear in the text that is used in a particular lesson plus, maybe, a short vocabulary practice activity. It is therefore frequently up to teachers to firstly adopt a more systematic and thorough approach to the teaching of vocabulary in the EFL courses they teach, and secondly to encourage students to take responsibility for vocabulary learning by introducing them to various vocabulary learning strategies. This paper will first look at guidelines that can be used in the development of a vocabulary programme and will then describe the steps that I take to select, present, practise and review vocabulary in a current affairs course that I teach to Japanese university students.

INTRODUCTION

Before the late 1980s, vocabulary teaching was not given particularly high priority in EFL syllabus writing. The vocabulary used depended on the context chosen to illustrate a particular grammar point or the situation selected to highlight the exponent of a function that was being presented to the students. So, for example, if the function of ordering food in a restaurant was being taught, the vocabulary that was introduced would be connected to this particular
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situation. The focus, however, would usually be on learning the exponents of this particular function rather than the connected vocabulary. The implication seemed to be that although vocabulary was of course necessary in order to speak a foreign language, it was not necessary to adopt a systematic approach to teaching it; learning new words would happen automatically at the same time as the supposedly more important grammar or functions were being presented.

In the second half of the 1980s, however, more attention began to be directed at vocabulary in EFL syllabuses. One reason for this was the development of large computer corpora, which allowed linguists to see in a more objective way how language is actually used and the frequency with which words and phrases occurred (O’Dell, 2001, p.261). It was now easier to study the frequency of words, their relationships, and how they are generally used. The importance of vocabulary as a means of achieving communicative goals also began to be stressed, and the motivational benefits of quickly developing a survival vocabulary for beginners was also highlighted (Meara, 1995, p.8-9).

Although EFL courses and text books have placed more focus on the learning of vocabulary over the last few years, in many cases activities are limited to a brief presentation of very short lists of vocabulary items that appear in written and listening texts in the lesson. These vocabulary lists are occasionally accompanied by brief practice activities, but the emphasis tends to be on assisting students to understand the text for that particular lesson. Developing a systematic approach to learning, practising and reviewing vocabulary items in order to help students to build their active and passive vocabulary for future use is often given low priority.

If students are studying English in an English speaking country, where they are exposed to English input from numerous sources, or are, for other reasons, exposed to large quantities of listening and reading outside the classroom, perhaps this approach is sufficient. Focusing on vocabulary items in a classroom lesson is perhaps not the most ideal way to increase students’ vocabulary as only a few words can be covered in any one lesson and only part of what a student needs to know about a word can be covered (Nation, 2005a). However, when students are not exposed to large amounts of language input outside the classroom, and their main source of vocabulary is found in the lesson, teachers cannot rely on incidental learning of large quantities of vocabulary taking place from reading or listening elsewhere. This is the situation in many English language courses at Japanese universities, where the students are majoring in a subject unrelated to English language but are required to attend one or two English language classes each week in their first and perhaps second year. In such cases, if teachers want to increase their students’ vocabulary, they need to spend more time on vocabulary development.
in the classroom than many text books allow for. This paper will first describe possible
guidelines that teachers might consider before attempting to develop a vocabulary teaching
programme, and will then describe an attempt I have made to develop a more systematic
approach to vocabulary teaching in a current affairs course that I am in charge of.

GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPING A VOCABULARY PROGRAMME

Selecting words

Because of the large number of words in the English language and the limited time available
in class, it is necessary for teachers to make a choice about what words to focus on during the
course. When selecting the vocabulary input for the course the teachers should consider a
variety of factors. White (cited in O’Dell, 2001, p.269) has listed some of the most important
considerations.

- Frequency. Teachers should try to focus on introducing high frequency vocabulary items early
  on. There are various frequency lists that teachers can refer to; for example, EFL publishers
  have produced graded lists of words based on frequency counts that show the words included
  in the texts at different stages of the reading programme.

- How difficult is the word to learn. For example English loan words or international words
  that the students are already familiar with are probably very easy for students to learn and
  should be presented at an early stage of the programme.

- Coverage. Words that can be used in a variety of situations should be introduced before words
  that are more limited in their use. For example, hit should come before punch or slap.

- Range. Neutral words that can be used over a range of registers and styles should be used
  before words that are less versatile.

- Opportunism. Words which are related to the learners’ immediate situation should be
  presented early on; for example it would be useful to introduce words that the teacher needs
  the students to understand in order to follow classroom instructions.

- Interests and needs of the students. Students who are, for example, majoring in economics,
  and are required to read economic texts in English in some of their courses, will probably be
  motivated to learn vocabulary items related to this area.

Textbook and aims of the course should also be considered. If the teacher is following a
textbook or the course has specific content aims, such as American culture, current affairs, or
business English, then of course these factors should also significantly affect the choice of
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vocabulary.

The level of the students is another very important consideration. The first four considerations mentioned above are especially important for beginner and lower intermediate level students to help them build a survival level vocabulary base in order to communicate in English in the real world. It has been estimated that with a vocabulary size of 2,000 words, a learner can understand about 80 per cent of the words in a text, and a vocabulary of between 2,000 and 3,000 provides a good basis for survival communication outside the classroom (Nation and Waring, 2001, p.9-10). The most frequent 2,000 to 3,000 words should be given priority before other, less frequent, words are learned. It is probably useful therefore for teachers to attempt to assess their students’ vocabulary level in order to select the most appropriate approach to selecting the vocabulary to include in the course. Useful tests for this purpose are the Vocabulary Levels Tests that appears in Schmitt (2005, p.192-200) and Nation (2003a, p.412-429).

Teaching the Meaning of Words

There are various ways that the meaning of unknown words can be communicated to learners. These include mime, pictures, explanations, using a L2 synonym, translations, and guessing the meaning from context. It has not been shown that any of these ways is better than any of the others in terms of accuracy. However, when comparisons have been made to find out the most effective way for learning the vocabulary, translation has come top (Nation, 2003b). Nation suggests that this is because translations are usually clear, short and familiar. Although there have been criticisms of providing L1 translations - often because it is sometimes difficult to get an exact equivalent - research shows that learning vocabulary in a foreign language through L1 translations is a fast and efficient way of learning (Nation, 2003b). This is especially important with beginner level and lower intermediate level learners, who need to build a survival vocabulary quickly. Moreover, although asking students to guess the meaning of words from context is a useful strategy, it is estimated that a knowledge of 98% of the surrounding words is necessary to enable students to guess the meaning of unknown words from context (Laufer, 2005. p.3). Coady (1997, cited in Hunt, A and Belgar, D, 1998, p.8) also draws attention to the fact that one cannot expect beginners to build up their vocabulary through extensive reading if they do not have enough vocabulary to understand what they are reading. He suggests that students should initially attempt to build up their vocabulary through study of the 3,000 most frequent words. Moreover, although it is often stated that words are
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best learned when they are met in context, this is not supported by research (Nation, 2005b, p.585); research in fact points to learning taking place most effectively when words are focused on out of context. Nation (2005, 585b) points out that every course should involve deliberate attention to vocabulary out of context as well as an opportunity to meet the word in context, and he points to four elements that should be included in the learning of new vocabulary: learning through meaning focused input, learning through meaning focused output, learning through deliberate study, and learning through fluency focused activities.

Focusing on the Form and Use of New Words

As well as attempting to convey the meaning of a word, teachers should draw attention to the form and use of the word. To draw attention to the form of the word the teacher should write the word on the board to show the spelling and should point out the stress pattern and pronunciation as well as the prefix, stem and suffix that make up the word (Nation 2005a). The students also need to practise saying the word. Knowing the pronunciation of the word is of course useful for helping the students recognize the word when they hear it and to enable them to produce the word in a conversation. The syllable structure and stress pattern of a word are also important because they are two ways in which words are stored in memory (Fay and Cutler, 1977, quoted in Hunt and Beglar, 2005, p.8). Teachers should also draw attention to the use of the word by pointing out information such as whether the word is countable or uncountable, possible collocations, and whether the word is formal or informal (Nation 2005a).

Different degrees of knowing a word

Knowing a word according to Richards (cited in Sokmen, 2001, p.241) involves knowing how frequently it occurs, its appropriateness in different situations, its form, its syntactic behaviour and its semantic features. It is possible to have varying degrees of knowledge of a word, ranging from vague recognition to being able to use the word in an appropriate way in a particular context (Schmitt and Schmitt, 1995, p.135). It is highly unlikely that students will grasp more than one meaning sense of a word with only one encounter. As students meet a word in different contexts and activities, they will gain a clearer understanding of its meaning and use (Sokmen, 2001, p.241). Acquisition of vocabulary takes place over time and a number of encounters in different contexts. Studies suggest between 5 and 16 encounters with a word are necessary before learners really acquire it (Nation, 1990, cited in Sokeman, 2001, p.241).
Reviewing Words

If words are not recycled, many words that are only partially known will be forgotten, which will mean that all the initial effort spent on learning the word will be wasted (Nation, 1990, quoted in Schmitt, 2005, p.137). Memory is of course an important factor in vocabulary learning and studies show that revision and repetition are of great assistance in helping students to remember words (O’Dell, 201, p.276). More frequent vocabulary items will be recycled naturally in many reading and listening passages as well as conversations that students encounter, but in order to increase the possibility of repeated encounters with less frequent words, teachers should encourage extensive reading outside the classroom (Schmitt, 2005, p.137). However, teachers should also make efforts to deliberately include the recycling of words into the language courses and avoid simply forgetting about a word after the initial presentation. This is especially important with students who are not being exposed to large amounts of input outside the classroom. Schmitt also points out that explicit teaching and reviewing - as quickly as possible - of the most frequent words in any second language are essential to further learning, and the acquisition of these words should not be left to chance (2005, p.137).

Studies show that the rate of forgetting is higher soon after the words have been initially learned and gradually slows down after that (Nation, 2003a, p.76). Memory research has found that review of words that is carried out for short periods spaced over time is more effective than long periods of review that are carried out close together (Nation, 2003a, p.76). Schmitt and Schmitt (1995, p.136) suggest that words should be first reviewed within 10 minutes of the initial meeting, and then again the following day, and then the following week. Further reviews should be carried out over the next few months.

The Depth of Processing is Important

Students will learn new words more effectively when deeper levels of semantic processing take place. Although retention does take place when students are simply shown the L2 words with L1 equivalents and asked to repeat them, better learning results when deeper processing of the word takes place (Sokmen, 2001, p.242). So rather than simply hand out a list of L2 words with L1 equivalents, a teacher might spend time describing the target word in L2 until the meaning becomes clear as this will involve the learner in deeper processing. In the same way, when reviewing words, rather than looking at a list of L2 words with L1 equivalents, learners should be asked to only look at the L1 words and try to retrieve the L2 equivalents.
from their memory. Teachers should try to therefore use a variety of presentation activities that require mental effort on the part of the learners. In the same way, review activities should involve learners trying to retrieve the word from their memories and therefore requiring a deeper level of processing.

**Vocabulary Learning Strategies**

Nation (2005b, p.589) points to four main strategies that teachers need to present and practise with their students. He stresses that time and effort should be spent on going over each strategy in class as they enable students to cope with the large number of low frequency words that they will meet when they use English and he suggests that the strategies be introduced at the same time as working on high frequency vocabulary. One very useful strategy is ‘inferring the meaning of words from context’. This strategy is best developed through reading with training focusing on guessing from immediate context, the parts of speech of the word, and other clues provided by background knowledge and conjunctions. Another strategy is ‘learning from word cards’, using second language word on one side and first language translations on the other side. Although the use of L1 translations is frequently frowned upon, research shows that learning vocabulary in this way is very effective for learning large numbers of words quickly (Nation, 2005b, p.590). Nation suggests that around 50 cards with one word and translation on each card should be focused on at one time. Another strategy involves teaching students a number of suffixes and prefixes and how to relate their meaning to the meaning of the word with the help of a dictionary. The fourth strategy is ‘using a dictionary’. With beginner and low-intermediate level students this can be a bilingual dictionary. However, once students have an understanding of the high frequency words in English, training can be given in the use of a monolingual dictionary.

**Vocabulary Tests**

Words are remembered well after students deliberately try to memorize them and one way to get students to do this is to give tests (Laufer, 2005, p.4). Tests are something that university students expect and most of them try hard to be well prepared. If students realize that their scores in vocabulary tests will be reflected in their grades, they tend to take good care to look after and organize information they are given regarding new vocabulary so as to optimize learning, and they will usually make an effort to intentionally memorize the words after lessons as well as before the tests. The completed tests will also provide the teacher with useful
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information relating to the students’ understanding of the meaning and use of the words being tested.

PUTTING THE GUIDELINES INTO PRACTICE

In order to show how a more focused approach to vocabulary teaching can be adopted by EFL teachers I will describe a typical lesson and some of the procedures I have used in a course I am currently teaching to Japanese university students. The course is officially titled ‘Current Affairs English’ and is a reading, listening and discussion course based on topics that have recently appeared in the news. The class is elective, which means that it is open to students of all levels, however the course title and course explanation usually result in the vast majority of students being around intermediate ability and this is the level that I target the material at.

Selection of Articles

As far as possible I try to select stories that contain a number of useful words and are about topics that I feel the students will be interested in. I also try to choose stories that the students will probably have some awareness of from the Japanese language media as this will usually mean that they are more likely to have developed an interest in the subject and have a desire to find out more. It will also mean that they have expectations about the content of the story and the vocabulary that is used, which should make it is easier for them to understand the article. In addition, it should increase the chance that they have given some thought to the subject and have formed opinions that can more readily used in discussions in class.

Selection of Vocabulary

When selecting the vocabulary from the text to focus on, I try to choose words and expressions that will help the students understand the particular text presented in the lesson, but I am more concerned with giving special attention to the words that I feel will be useful in a wider context for future use. As well as the words taken from the text, I also introduce other ‘useful’ words connected to the topic as well as lexical phrases that will help the students in the discussion stage of the lesson.
A Typical Lesson

The topic for this particular lesson was about a kidnapping in Paraguay that had resulted in two Japanese being held as hostages. Rather than just handing out a word list, I first tried to elicit as many relevant words as possible from the students in order to involve a deeper level of processing. I started by trying to describe in English what happens in a typical kidnapping and then asked what this particular crime is called in English. Fortunately, one of the students was able to produce the word ‘kidnapping’. I asked him to give the meaning in Japanese to make sure that everyone understood. I then asked if anyone had read about two Japanese being kidnapped recently. A few of the students mentioned the kidnapping in Paraguay. After checking that everyone knew where Paraguay was, I wrote the headline ‘Kidnapping in Paraguay’ on the board and asked the students to work in pairs for a few minutes and try to think of some English words connected to this story. I then asked some students to come up and write the words on the board. Getting the students to work in pairs involves them in having to think about the meaning of the words, but it also enables them to help each other. To get the students to think about the words more I gave a description of some of the words that had been written on the board (for example, ‘It the money paid for the release of a prisoner’) without saying which words I was referring to, and asked individual students to identify what the words were. Next I handed out the word list for the lesson - with Japanese equivalents written next to them (as can be seen below in the copy of the handout) - and went over the pronunciation, pointing out the stressed syllables on the board.

KIDNAPPING IN PARAGUAY (word list)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kidnap</th>
<th>誘拐する</th>
<th>Set free／release</th>
<th>解放する</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kidnapper</td>
<td>誘拐犯</td>
<td>Foreign ministry</td>
<td>外務省</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whereabouts</td>
<td>居場所</td>
<td>Arrest</td>
<td>逮捕する</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authorities</td>
<td>当局</td>
<td>Hostage</td>
<td>人質</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confirm</td>
<td>確認する</td>
<td>Demand</td>
<td>要求</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harm/injure</td>
<td>負傷する</td>
<td>Exhausted</td>
<td>へとへとに疲れた</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological</td>
<td>精神的</td>
<td>Weapons</td>
<td>武器</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>肉体的</td>
<td>Cell phone</td>
<td>携帯電話</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal</td>
<td>犯罪者</td>
<td>Ransom</td>
<td>身代金</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shock</td>
<td>ショック</td>
<td>Heading towards</td>
<td>に向かう</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Public relations 広報活動 Border 国境
Violence/Violent 暴力/暴力の Witness 目撃者
Commit 犯す Burglary 住居侵入罪
Theft 窃盗 Acquaintance 知り合い
Criminal record 前科 Source 筋
Crime 犯罪 Murder 殺人事件

Having the Japanese translation available is a quick and easy way of giving the meaning of any words the students are unsure of or that were not introduced at the earlier stage. Moreover, it is often difficult to give a clear explanation of the meaning of a word in L2. I also provided other information such as collocations and gave some examples of how some of the more ‘useful’ words appear in sentences. I have found that when more attention is given to a word, the students are more likely to remember it. The students then repeated the words after my spoken model. After giving the students a few minutes to look over the words, I asked the students to work in pairs; one student covered the word list so he or she could not see it and the other student tested him or her, asking, for example, ‘how do you say 誘拐する in English?’ or ‘how do you say kidnap in Japanese?’ After asking the meaning of ten words, the students changed roles.

In order to give the students further practice in trying to recall the words and to also show how the words are used in context, I handed out a list of sentences, each one containing one of the words from the vocabulary list. The space where the word should have been, however, was blank. A Japanese translation for each sentence was provided. In the copy of the handout below the correct words have been inserted in italics.

KIDNAPPING IN PARAGUAY
(Complete sentences with appropriate words)
A. 乗っ取り犯人は200万ドルの身の代金を要求した。
The hijacker 1) demanded a 2) ransom of two million dollars.
B. ゴミ処理は当局の主な頭痛の種となっている。
Getting rid of garbage has become a major headache for the 3) authorities.
C. 彼の居場所は不明です。
Nobody knows his 4) whereabouts.
D. 遅かれ早かれ人質たちは解放されるだろう。
Sooner or later, the 5) hostages will be 6) released.
E. 携帯電話の電源を切るべきである。
You should turn off the 7) cell phone.
F. その報道はまだ確認されていない。
The report has not been 8) confirmed yet.
G. 彼が負傷したという知らせは彼女にとってショックであった。
The news that he had been 9) injured was a 10) shock to her.
I. へとへとに疲れて、昨晩は帰宅した。
I was 11) exhausted when I got home last night.
K. その悪名高い犯罪者は昨日逮捕された。
The notorious 12) criminal was 13) arrested yesterday.
L. テレビは暴力行為を見て、それがとりわけ若年者の者たちに影響を及ぼす。
Television shows 14) violence, which influences, above all, younger people.

(Sentences taken or adapted from Jim Breen’s WWWJDIC Japanese Dictionary Server.)

Without referring to the original vocabulary list that I had handed out, the students had to try and fill in the missing words. The students then discussed their answers in pairs and I asked some of them to come up and write the words on the board so that the answers could be checked.

The next step was to get the students to read a newspaper article about this topic. Rather than just giving the students a list of comprehension questions to answer, I asked each student to write down three things they already knew about this story and three things they would like to know. I did this in order to encourage the students to predict the content of the article and also to increase their desire to find out more information. The information and questions were then collected and written on the board under two separate headings: ‘facts we know already’ and ‘information we would like to know’. This is also a useful vocabulary practice activity as it provides an opportunity for the students to produce the words they have just been introduced to. The students were then asked to read the article (see below) and try to find confirmation for items on the ‘facts we know already list’ and also try to find the answers to the questions on the ‘information we would like to know’ list. After reading, the students shared their responses with their partner and this was then fed back to the whole class.

KIDNAPPING IN PARAGUAY (reading passage)

A Japanese woman kidnapped earlier this month in Paraguay was released on Tuesday, but the whereabouts of her
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Japanese boss and two others remain unknown, authorities said. Sawako Yamaguchi, 37, was set free in the Paraguayan capital Asuncion and returned to her home by taxi.

The Japanese Foreign Ministry said it confirmed Yamaguchi’s release around 11 p.m. Tuesday Japan time through her husband, who said she was not harmed by her captors. But she is extremely exhausted both psychologically and physically, and Paraguayan police said they took her to a hospital because she was showing signs of shock.

Yamaguchi is a secretary for Hirokazu Ota, 62, president of land management company Victoria. They are both members of the Unification Church, a religious group founded in South Korea by Sun Myung Moon and known for holding mass weddings. Yamaguchi, Ota and two Paraguayans were kidnapped by a group armed with automatic weapons on April 1 when the Japanese were heading toward Asuncion by car on a national highway. Yamaguchi, who was driving, and Ota were returning from a gathering of Unification Church members held in Ciudad del Este near the border with Brazil. The captors initially demanded $25,000 (3 million yen) in ransom from Ota’s company, using Ota’s cellphone.

Local TV station Canal 9 first reported Yamaguchi’s release but did not give the location of her release or of her captors. No information was available about Ota or the Paraguayan couple kidnapped with the two Japanese after they came across the kidnapping in progress. The Paraguayans are a police officer and a female acquaintance.

Local police sources have said police believe the kidnappers, who reportedly had been holding the four people for a ransom of $750,000, are a relatively new group. There are between 20 and 25 people in the group, mainly in their 20s and 30s. They are mostly Paraguayans, but there are also seven Brazilians and four Argentines, they said.

Many of the kidnappers have criminal records, including violent acts, and among them are four former Paraguayan police officers expelled from the force for their involvement in crimes, the sources said.

At least three groups that had been committing burglaries and murders in Caaguazu and Ciudad del Este, in Alto Parana, formed one group and began kidnapping people around January, according to the sources. This new group is believed to have been involved in four other kidnappings in the last four months.

Paraguay’s national police in Alto Parana, in charge of the kidnapping case, so far have identified the kidnapper who spoke over the telephone to negotiators, the sources said, and another has been identified based on witness’ accounts of the thefts of two cars used in the kidnapping.

The ransom demand has since increased. Tomohisa Ota, head of the public relations department of the Unification Church in Japan, told The Asahi Shimbun the organization has also confirmed Yamaguchi’s release but has yet to learn details of the situation. “We’d like to deal with the matter in a cautious manner until Mr. Ota is released,” he said. The Unification Church, whose members are known as Moonies, has dispatched officials from South Korea to deal with the matter. (Taken from articles in Asahi Shimbun, April 12, 2007 and Japan Times, April 11, 2007)
The next phase was a discussion stage in which the students had to work together in pairs and discuss various questions related to the story. The questions I used were as follows:

1. What other kidnappings have you read or heard about in the news recently? What happened?
2. What are some reasons for kidnappings?
3. What are some areas in the world where kidnappings are common? Why do you think this is so?
4. What are some things kidnappers and hijackers demand?
5. Do you think that governments or organizations should always pay the ransom and agree to the demands of kidnappers and hijackers? Why/Why not?

This also provided a lot of useful fluency practice in actually using many of the words that were being focused on in the lesson. Having a knowledge of a variety of relevant words helped the students to discuss the issues at some length. At the end of the discussion activity I carried out a feedback session with the whole class. For homework I asked the students to review the vocabulary they had learned in the lesson in preparation for an activity in the following class.

Review activities

In the next class I started the lesson with a quick review of the words from the previous lesson by asking the students to match the English meaning with the Japanese equivalent or by providing a brief description of the word in English and asking the students to say what the word was. I then asked the students to use their imaginations and tell their partner a short story using as many of the following words as possible:

kidnap, kidnapper, weapon, hostage, demand, ransom, harm, exhausted, release, arrest, crime, commit, confirm, authorities, foreign ministry

This activity again helped the students recall the words, and provided useful fluency practice in actually using the words to tell a story. Most of the students were able to construct a plausible story without much difficulty, showing that they had a good grasp of the meaning of the words and how they were used.

Over the following weeks I continued to use the first part of each class to review words learned in previous lessons. As the term progresses, the number of words learned of course
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increases, however, I usually select a few different words from each previous lesson to review each week. It is recommended that teachers provide between six and ten exposures to each word during a course (Laufer, 2005, p.3). As was mentioned earlier, students will often forget words that they do not frequently meet. I also encourage the students to keep vocabulary review books or cards which have the words written in L2 on one side and in L1 on the other side, so that they can regularly review the words by themselves outside the class. Nation (1995, p.5) recommends the use of cards rather than word lists as the order of the cards can be changed, and by looking at the L1 word first and trying to recall the L2 equivalent, rather than looking at the L1 and L2 equivalents together, more mental effort is involved and therefore it is a more effective way of learning. In class, I use a variety of review activities as well as the ones mentioned above. From experience I have found that games involving students working in pairs or groups are a particularly effective way to review vocabulary as they usually engage the students in an enjoyable and active way and thus make the review more memorable. They also add variety to the lesson. One activity that I find particularly effective involves putting words in a number of categories. The students work together in pairs. Each student has a worksheet with between six and nine categories of word sets. Each set usually has about five words. So in total each student’s worksheet contains between about 30 and 45 words - as can be seen in the sample worksheets below. The students then take it in turns to be guessers and hinters. The hinter selects a word and tells the guesser the category of the set that the word belongs to, and then attempts to describe the word. The guesser then attempts to guess what the word is. For example, the hinter might say, “category ‘zoo animals’; this is an animal which lives in trees, it has a long tail, and it likes to eat bananas.” Hopefully, the guesser will be able to deduce that the word required is ‘monkey’. Then the students change roles and the hinter becomes the guesser, and the guesser becomes the hinter. This is repeated for as long as the teacher wishes the activity to continue. This activity is very versatile and can be used to review different vocabulary items each time. Of course another way to arrange the activity is to get the hinter to read out the words in the set, and ask the guesser to try and guess what the category is. Another version is to give the students the sets of words with an extra word in each set which does not belong. The students can then work together in pairs to try and find the odd-one-out and explain why it is different from the others.
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CATEGORIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>In the Office</th>
<th>Sports and activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>thoughtful</td>
<td>co-worker</td>
<td>martial arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quick tempered</td>
<td>salary</td>
<td>rugby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>serious</td>
<td>stationery</td>
<td>fishing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hard working</td>
<td>boss</td>
<td>soccer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>punctual</td>
<td>accountant</td>
<td>basketball</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Things that are white</th>
<th>Relatives</th>
<th>Places</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>snow</td>
<td>nephew</td>
<td>museum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sugar</td>
<td>niece</td>
<td>cafeteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>salt</td>
<td>mother-in-law</td>
<td>shopping mall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paper</td>
<td>cousin</td>
<td>aquarium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clouds</td>
<td>grandmother</td>
<td>library</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shopping</th>
<th>University</th>
<th>Tools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>stationery store</td>
<td>semester</td>
<td>hammer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash</td>
<td>cafeteria</td>
<td>saw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>credit card</td>
<td>grade</td>
<td>screwdriver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guarantee</td>
<td>credit</td>
<td>paint brush</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shipping charge</td>
<td>library</td>
<td>flashlight</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### CATEGORIES

#### Student B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Expressions</th>
<th>Money</th>
<th>Shopping</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>congratulations</td>
<td>lend</td>
<td>shopping mall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can’t stand it</td>
<td>borrow</td>
<td>purchase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you are welcome</td>
<td>interest rate</td>
<td>pay in installments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>well done</td>
<td>cheque</td>
<td>bill/invoice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have a nice weekend</td>
<td>salary</td>
<td>cash on delivery</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Travel</th>
<th>Feelings</th>
<th>Places of Recreation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>passport</td>
<td>excited</td>
<td>zoo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>flight</td>
<td>bored</td>
<td>amusement park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>suitcase</td>
<td>exhausted</td>
<td>cinema</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reservation</td>
<td>thirsty</td>
<td>museum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ticket</td>
<td>homesick</td>
<td>aquarium</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jobs</th>
<th>Kidnapping</th>
<th>Places</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mechanic</td>
<td>ransom</td>
<td>museum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cashier</td>
<td>hostage</td>
<td>cafeteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dentist</td>
<td>kidnapper</td>
<td>shopping mall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accountant</td>
<td>weapon</td>
<td>aquarium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>architect</td>
<td>witness</td>
<td>library</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A shorter pair-work activity is to give each student a short list of about ten words and ask each student to ask his or her partner questions so that the partner answers with the words on the list. It is a good idea to give a time limit of about ten minutes for each student. One student might have a list of words such as the following:

Museum
Nervous
Golf
Ransom
Passport
Salary
Credit
Congratulations
Blog

Architect

So, for example, in order to elicit the word ‘nervous’, the student might ask ‘how do you feel before an exam?’. This activity serves the double function of reviewing the vocabulary items and also providing practice in asking questions. A simpler version of this question and answer activity, which might be used with lower level students, is for the teacher to actually provide the questions for the hinter to use. All these activities mentioned above involve the students in mental effort and are therefore effective ways of reviewing the vocabulary.

Student Presentations

During the course I ask students to give a short presentation they have prepared about a topic in the news, - perhaps one or two students each lesson over a period of weeks. I ask them to try and select a story that is related to a topic that was introduced in a previous lesson. So, for example, if we looked at story related to environmental problems in an earlier lesson, a student might make a short presentation based on a story about environmental problems in a different context. In this way it is likely that many of the words that were used in the original story will occur again, which provides a good opportunity for both presenters and listeners to meet the words again in context. The words are usually produced once more in the later discussion stage that follows the presentations.

Use of Tests

Having regular tests is also a useful way to review the newly learned words. As was mentioned earlier, words are usually remembered well when students deliberately try to memorize them, and one good way to ensure this happens is to have tests. I usually have regular vocabulary tests every three weeks which include many of the words introduced in the previous three lessons. As the marks from the tests are used for assessment and the students are aware of this, they usually big a big effort to review all the words before the test. In the test I use a variety of question types, including matching the L2 word next to the L1 equivalent, writing the missing word in incomplete sentences (as used in the example lesson above), crossing out the word that does not belong in a group of words, and writing short stories using a group of words that I provide.
CONCLUSION

In recent years there has been more emphasis placed on the role of vocabulary in language teaching. Although this has led to an increased focus on vocabulary in many EFL courses, the vocabulary learning sections in many books are frequently limited to short glossaries covering the words that occur in a particular unit. It is therefore the responsibility of the teachers to develop a more systematic approach towards developing vocabulary learning programmes in the courses that they teach. Attention needs to be given to the selection of the vocabulary, with the level and needs of the learners taken into account, and is important that new words are presented with attention being given to their form and use. The words need to be repeatedly reviewed during the course with the learners meeting the words in a number of different contexts. Learners should be exposed to the words in listening and reading activities as well as having the opportunity to use them in fluency activities. Testing is a very useful way to get the students to deliberately learn the words and also provides an opportunity for the teacher to see how well the students understand the words. It is also important that teachers introduce their students to vocabulary learning strategies that can be used inside and outside the classroom.

REFERENCES


