WHAT CONSIDERATIONS SHOULD THE EFL/ESL TEACHER TAKE INTO ACCOUNT WHEN TEACHING VOCABULARY?

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ABSTRACT

As foreign language/second language (EFL/ESL) learners, vocabulary mastery is one of the important aspects of English. The center of language teaching and important for language learners are aspect of vocabulary. Several studies have shown that teaching vocabulary can be considered a problem, because some teachers are unsure about best practices in teaching and not really aware of way to initiate instructional vocabulary learning (Berne & Blachowicz, 2008). This article presents four aspects the EFL/ESL teacher might take into account when teaching vocabulary, namely: focus on frequent words, strategies for dealing with unknown words, lexical approach in teaching vocabulary, and semantic fields in vocabulary teaching.

Keywords: *Vocabulary teaching, EFL/ESL teacher, strategies*

INTRODUCTION

The essential component of language learning is vocabulary. Understanding vocabulary in learning a language links to the four language skills such as speaking, listening, writing, and reading (Brown, 1994).

Because of this importance, vocabulary in learning strategies is interesting to linguists and for language teachers. Zimmerman (1997) reported the brief history of vocabulary teaching from the late of eighteenth century until the late of twentieth century. He said that the method was firstly recognized was the Grammar Translation Method in the late eighteenth century which aims to help students to read and write classical materials and to pass standardize exams. In 1880s, through Reform Movement and Direct Method, the vocabulary teaching was emphasized on spoken language and phonetic training. The next major stage in the development of vocabulary learning was the importance of vocabulary to facilitate reading skills and his recommendation of the use of word-frequency lists in the selection of vocabulary in student materials. The 1960s brought audio-lingual teaching, followed by the Communicative Approach and Natural Approach in which vocabulary, as the bearer of meaning, is the key to understanding the message. Finally, in the late of twentieth century, vocabulary learning and teaching focus on lexical context to understand the meaning (Zimmerman, 1997).

Knowing a vocabulary item is not a simple process. According to Jordan (2002), to know a word has several characteristics such as to know its spoken and written form, to recall, to relate of certain object or concept, to use of grammatical

forms, to pronounce of recognizable way, to spell correctly, to correct the certain words, to use of appropriate level of formality, to be aware of connotations and association.

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that knowing a word is not just simply understand the single words, but learners have to understand more comprehensively the meaning of the word based on its context or position in the sentence or clause. Related to this, Richards (1985) says that the aim of vocabulary teaching covers the certain number words. Therefore, the way of teaching techniques can help to know the concept or words.

In this article, the writer discusses four aspects the EFL/ESL teacher might take into account when teaching vocabulary, namely: focus on frequent words, strategies for dealing with unknown words, lexical approach in teaching vocabulary, and semantic fields in vocabulary teaching

FINDINGS A ND DISCUSSION
Focus on Frequent Words

The first and most important thing for teacher to consider in teaching vocabulary in EFL/ESL context is how they choose what vocabulary to teach. Word frequency is important things to help teachers in many ways. Firstly, it can help the teacher to choose which the best word to focus on is. Secondly, it provides the to develop the words list, designing level of courses, reading test and vocabulary test (Nation, 1990). In order to communicate better, Nation and Newton (1997) then divides the vocabulary which is needed by English language learner in order to communicate better (Table 1).

Table 1. *Vocabulary division based on learners' needs*

Level	Number of Words	Text Coverage, %
High Frequency Words	2.000	87
Academic Vocabulary	800	8
Technical Vocabulary	2.000	3
Low-frequency word	123.000	2
Total	128.000	100

Source: (Nation & Newton, 1997, p. 239)

Clearly, 2.000 high frequency words of English focus on this step because it is one of the ways to speak and write in normal ways. For 800 headwords contains for frequent in academic text in a wide range such as in senior high school, university and newspaper. If the learners intend to do academic study, the next level of vocabulary becomes the academic vocabulary in teaching. The technical vocabulary has a very narrow range, that is, it is used within a specialized field. Academic fields like law, mathematics, chemistry, and philosophy clearly have technical vocabulary. Technical vocabulary is best taught within the content area of the relevant subject and is not usually a useful focus in preparatory English classes (Nation & Newton, 1997).

Strategies for Dealing with Unknown Words

The importance of teaching students to learning strategies is a modern foreign language pedagogy (Brown, 1994). Related to vocabulary teaching, Nation (1990, p. 160) says it is very good to discuss word mastery strategies compared to words because they rarely appear in the form of low frequencies. A study by Kucera and Francis (1976) cited in Nation (1990) found that "the percentage of the words (types) occurring once ranged from 56 percent to almost 80 percent. That is, in each 2000-word text over one-half to three-quarters of the words were not repeated".

Generally, there are three kinds of strategies which are used to identify unknown vocabulary. They are: clues to help guessing, using memory and mnemonic techniques to remember word meanings, and using prefixes, roots, and suffixes.

a. Clues to help guessing

To help guess in the vocabulary of explanations by the author of various types of clues to provide information related to. Brown (1994) argues that definition, learners' experience of the world, contrast, inference and analysis can be used as clues to help in guessing. Steinberg (1978) cited in (Nation, 1990, p. 160) says "grammar, punctuation, Contrast, connectives and learner's experience and common sense" help to understand the words.

However, most authors (Nation, 1994; Nation & Newton, 1997) claim that to guess the meaning of unknown words it takes about 19 out of 20 words in a text for a student. Hence, this strategy is only good for native speakers or high level of second or foreign language learners.

b. Using memory and mnemonic

A series of studies inspired by Atkinson (1975) in the teaching of foreign language vocabulary in modern times is called mnemonic devices. Nattinger (1980) proposed that the association network is a place to store words and to remember. Mental lexicon exists in words such as sight not only with meaning, form and sound but also sight (Nattinger, 1980).

When a word is unknown and discovered by ESL students, extra effort do not do for the students to remember the word. The keyword technique is one of the most effective things to do. In this technique, students make unusual associations between word forms and their meanings.

This technique is suitable to be applied in ESL vocabulary teaching context. However, this technique has several weaknesses. Firstly, the relationship between one word to another remains between form and meaning where the word is developed that is called mnemonic approach. In fact, vocabulary has several dimensions of meaning, such as referential, syntactic, pragmatic, and emotional. Secondly, the built-in tricks to help spelling and pronunciation that can help to use this technique (Ellis, 1997, p. 137).

c. Using prefixes, roots, and suffixes

For ESL learners, knowledge of Latin affixes and roots has its own value. To connect words between the beginning and the end is one of the benefits used to help learning foreign words. "There are three things an ESL learner must possess in order to guess meaning more effectively. First, to have the affix and its root

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revealed it is necessary to break the word into several. Second, understand the meaning of the parts. Third, ESL learners can see the relationship between your passage and meaning from a new origin" (Nation, 1990, p. 169).

Lexical Approach in Teaching Vocabulary
Since the 1980s, the lexical approach has focused on teaching English (Zimmerman, 1997). A collection of individual words with fixed meanings and lexis which includes single words and word combinations stored in our mental lexicon is a lexical approach to making distinctions between words traditionally (Moudria, 2001).

Hall (2004) discusses three reasons that led to this concentration on the lexical element in language. The first is the popular recognition of the communicative approach which believes that to be understood, speakers of a second language did not need to produce grammatically perfect sentences. The second is the awareness that the lexical phrase or chunk is an ideal unit which can be exploited for language teaching. Thirdly, the realization that syllabuses could be devised around lexical material with organizational principles that would be just as valid as those used for structural syllabuses (Hall, 2004, pp. 1-2) .

The main focus of lexical approach on vocabulary teaching is collocation. Nattinger (1980) explained that the notion of teaching language production is the units for a particular situation. Based on this phenomenon, ESL teachers have to pay more attention in order to make this teaching process run effectively. In relation to this, Moudria (2001) suggests several activities that can be used to develop learners' knowledge of lexical chains, as follows:
   a) "Intensive and extensive listening and reading in the target language.
   b) First and second language comparisons and translation carried out chunk-for-chunk, rather than word-for-word aimed at raising language awareness.
   c) Repetition and recycling of activities, such as summarizing a text orally one day and again a few days later to keep words and expressions that have been learned active.
   d) Guessing the meaning of vocabulary items from context,
   e) Noticing and recording language patterns and collocations.
   f) Working with dictionaries and other reference tools " (Moudria, 2001, p. 4)

Semantic Field in Vocabulary Teaching
Jordan (2002) mentioned that in order to have an active vocabulary, learners need to know about the relationship between words with the same meaning, the use and the context. There are two main issues relate to semantic theory in vocabulary language teaching, they are: using grids and semantic mapping/word networks to understand vocabulary.
a. Componential analysis: Using grids
In pedagogic, to describe the similarities and differences in meaning. This breaks down into a word known as the semantic component or feature (Channell, 1981 in Jordan (2002).

In using component analysis recognize vocabulary has several things. Firstly, to teach semantic sets allows students to recognize semantic relationships between words using component analysis. In the application, exchange in all contexts has very few words in any language that are exchanged in all contexts. Therefore, the term 'synonym' used in foreign language teaching is often and imprecise. Component analysis gives students the opportunity that similar words are not synonymous. Therefore, it is pedagogically suggested to provide learners with word activities that incorporate various sets of semantics (Amer, 2002).

Based on this phenomenon, it is suggested for ESL teacher to pay more attention to semantic category of vocabulary. One of the popular ways to do this is by using grid. Jordan (2002) proposes that words in the same semantic field can be grouped together in a grid which indicates (-) if the component is part of the meaning of the marked word. Rusdka et al. (1982) gives example how to analysis "being surprised" using grid (Table 2).

Table 2. *How to analyze "being surprised" using grid*

	affect with wonder	because unexpected	because difficult to believe	so as to cause confusion	as to leave one helpless to act or think
surprise	+	+			
astonish	+		+		
amaze	+			+	
astound	+				+
flabbergast	+				+

Source: Rusdka et al. (1982) cited in Jordan (2002, p. 155)

Grid can be used in various ways. It can be used to help students see different elements and categories in vocabulary, and variety of consolidation exercises, such as: cloze exercises, blank filling, discussion and comparison of word formation, collocation, reference for reading or writing tasks, and comprehension and memory activities Jordan (2002, pp. 155-156).

b. Use semantic mapping/word networks

The process in visual category display and relationship is a semantic mapping (Svenconis & Kerst, 1994). This is a visual approach to vocabulary presentation that can help students to associate words, remember them and extend the network themselves. In this case, for instructional, various memory techniques and basic understanding are part of semantic mapping such as making associations, grouping, and using visual memory from semantic maps that combine old knowledge with the new ones. (Oxford, 1988 cited in Svenconis and Kerst (1994).

There are several linguists and language teachers have used this approach. Jordan (2002), for example, used word networks for presenting vocabulary. Table 3 below shows the example of vocabulary associated with universities.
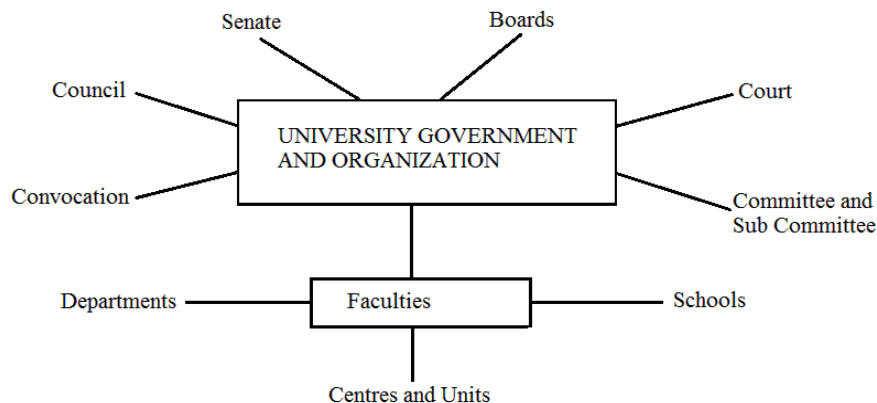
Figure 1. Word Networks: Vocabulary Describing Universities

Source: Jordan (2002)

Jordan (2002) suggests that in designing the model, there are various visual elements can be used, such as "circles, ovals or boxes; size of lettering: capital or lower case; underlining; solid lines or broken, etc".

This method is fun for students so that they can enjoy the learning process. In addition, by using word networks, the vocabularies might be stored longer in the learners' memories. However, Tinkham (1993) cited in Jordan (2002) says that in the USA "new words... are learned most easily if they are not grouped for presentation in prefabricated semantic clusters It is possible to imagine students being confused by a number of similar or related words being presented for learning at the same time".

CONCLUSSION

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded several things about vocabulary teaching in the EFL/ESL setting. (1) Vocabulary teaching in the EFL/ESL context hay been evolved for a long time. To achieve learning outcomes requires methods, approaches, or strategies. So that vocabulary is defined as a collection of individual words with a fixed meaning. However, recently, vocabulary is defined as a lexis, which includes not only single words but also word combinations that we store in our mental lexicon (Moudria, 2001). Changes in views on vocabulary have implications for vocabulary teaching. (2) Until the last decade, in addition to the more important task of teaching grammar and language pronunciation it was common practice to consider vocabulary teaching (Richards, 1985, p. 77). The things involved in learning a second language are those that broaden the understanding of study outcomes in many disciplines. Today, linguists and teachers are more effective in using context rather than understanding meaning. Based on the phenomenon, there are at least four considerations the EFL/ESL teacher should take into account when teaching vocabulary, they are: focus on frequency words, teaching strategies for dealing with unknown words, consider lexical approach in teaching vocabulary and pay attention to semantic fields in vocabulary teaching. By paying more attention to all those aspects, hopefully vocabulary teaching will be more attractive for the EFL/ESL teachers and more enjoyable for the learners.

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