ELT Methods and Practices

Unit 4: Dealing with Vocabulary

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What is vocabulary?

- Our everyday concept of vocabulary is dominated by the dictionary; we tend to think of it as an inventory of individual words with their associated meanings.

- But, does vocabulary consist of single words, or should we be thinking in terms of larger chunks of speech?

- Finally, what does "knowing" vocabulary actually mean?

What are words? (1/2)

Function words have little meaning on their own and are chiefly used to indicate a grammatical relationship

The class of function words is closed. Languages do not easily add new words to this set. English has ~300 closed class words.

Content words are words that carry the content or the meaning of a sentence

The class of content words is open.

What are words? (2/2)

Function words

- Prepositions: of, at, in, without, between.
- Pronouns: he, they, anybody, it, one
- Determiners: the, a, that, my, more, much, either, neither.
- Conjunctions: and, that, when, while, although, or.
- Auxiliary: verbs be (is, am, are), have, got, do.

Content words

- Nouns: John, room, answer.
- Adjectives: happy, new, large, grey.
- Main verbs: search, grow, hold, have.
- Adverbs: really, completely, very, also, enough.

More than just words…lexical items (multi-word items) (1/2)

- **Phrasal verbs:** they are generally recognised as lexical units consisting of more than one single form (e.g. come across, put up with etc.)

- **Idioms:** notorious for causing trouble to second language learners because the whole unit has a meaning that cannot be deduced from the meaning of its individual components (e.g. kick the bucket, let the cat out of the bag etc.)

More than just words…lexical items (multi-word items) (2/2)

- **Collocations:** words commonly appearing together in combinations of two or more words that seem to form relatively fixed expressions.

What does it mean to know a lexical item? (1/5)

- **Form**: It refers to the mechanics of language, the visible and audible parts of vocabulary→ the spelling, phonemes, syllable stress, words in a phrase, prefixes or suffixes, choice of noun or verb, etc.

- Prefixes, suffixes, and roots are important; Students should be able to breakdown the components of a word to guess its meaning. They should also be able to use inflectional suffixes to understand whether a word is an adjective, a noun etc.

What does it mean to know a lexical item? (2/5)

- E.g.: 'submarine' ('**sub**' → under; underwater) or that the suffix

- -**ly** is typically (though not always) an adverb suffix.

What does it mean to know a lexical item? (3/5)

Meaning: What meaning does the vocabulary item have in a (specific) context?

- There are two aspects of meaning: the literal/referential meaning of the lexical items and the meaning they acquire in the context they are being used in.

What does it mean to know a lexical item? (4/5)

E.g.:

- She's wearing a **red** skirt. (Literal/Referential meaning → the naming of the particular color.)

Vs

- She's **red** from sitting in the sun. (Meaning: Her skin has turned a particular shade of pink-red indicating sunburn.)

Vs

- He was a well-known **red**. (Red indicates the person's political beliefs and affiliation.)

What does it mean to know a lexical item? (5/5)

Use/Function: When or why is a particular lexical item, used in a specific text (oral or written)?

- The lexical items, functional expressions etc., we choose to use are determined by the situation we are in and/or what we want to communicate to our listener(s). (Use and meaning are interconnected.) e.g.: **'Thank you in advance for your prompt reply' would be really unnatural and inappropriate in a context of an 'informal mail to a friend'.**

Denotation Vs Connotation (1/2)

- **Denotation**: what the word actually refers to, its primary meaning or reference.

- **Connotation**: The feelings and undertones conveyed by certain words (they could be positive or negative). The connotative meaning of a word is based on implication, or shared emotional association with a word. Greasy" has a denotation meaning slippery but also has a connotation when referring to a "greasy" person.

- **Associations**: Similar to connotations, but unlike them they do not relate to the system of the language but to the individual or the culture.

Denotation Vs Connotation (2/2)

- The denotation of the word snake is "any of numerous scaly, legless, and sometimes venomous reptiles".

- The connotations for the word snake could include evil or danger.

Connotation

Positive:

- We bought inexpensive souvenirs at the amusement park.

- I ate a moist sandwich.

- I am a bargain shopper.

Negative:

- We bought cheap souvenirs at the amusement park.

- I ate a soggy sandwich.

- I am a cheapskate.

Example

Words: fat, obese, plump, large, stout

Denotation: being overweight or too heavy for your size.

Connotation:

- fat: a greasy, flesh way, lack of self control.

- obese: clinical word, grossly overweight.

- plump: pleasantly overweight, a bit round and cute.

- large: heavy, but also have a bigger frame than average; more flattering word than others.

- stout: bulky and strong, like a football lineman.

Connotation Example

Thin   **Slim**

[1]   [2]

Sense relations: Synonymy

Synonymy (partial conceptual synonymy): is essentially a bilateral or symmetrical sense relation in which more than one linguistic form can be said to have the same conceptual or propositional meaning. This does not mean, however, that the words should be interchangeable in all contexts. There are no totally substitutable synonyms. **E.g.: kid vs child / skinny vs thin / house vs home.**

Sense relations: Antonymy (1/2)

Is a notion of semantic opposition or unrelatedness.

- **complementarity**: where the presence of one sense component excludes another. **e.g.: alive vs dead / single vs. married / male vs. female.**

- **converseness**: these are contrastive lexical relations where there is a measure of logical reciprocity. **e.g.: husband vs. wife / buy vs. sell, above vs. below.**

Sense relations: Antonymy (2/2)

- **incompatibility**: this refers to relational contrasts between items in a semantic field. It occurs in sets like seasons, days of the week, generic types etc. **e.g. :"The house is red"** > this automatically excludes any other colour.

- **gradable opposites**: degrees of opposition are identified. **e.g. : hot-cold / big-small / good – bad.**
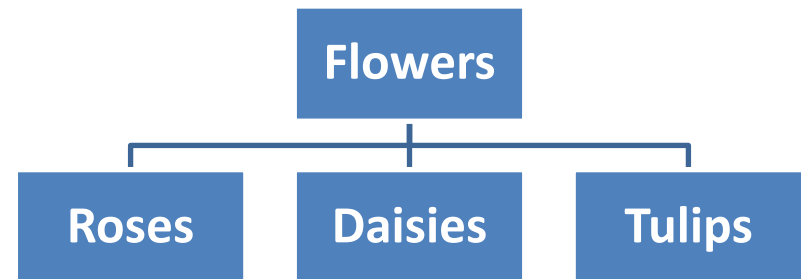
Sense relations: Hyponymy

Refers to super- and sub-ordinate relations. Hyponymy is a hierarchical relationship existing between specific and general lexical items ; the meaning of the specific item is included in the meaning of the more general one.

e.g.: flowers > superordinate & roses, daisies and tulips > co-hyponyms.

Flowers

**Roses** **Daisies** **Tulips**

What does 'top' mean?

- Synonyms: highest, best.

- Antonyms: bottom, lowest, worst.

- Different meanings: 'She's wearing a blue top.' 'Put the top on the bottle.'

- Spelling (actual or phonetic).

- Collocations: e.g., 'top-brass' 'top-heavy'.

- Part of Speech: e.g., noun, verb, adjective.

So…

Knowing a vocabulary item means knowing its:

- Form,

- Meaning and

- Function.

Form

Meaning

Function

Knowledge of vocabulary
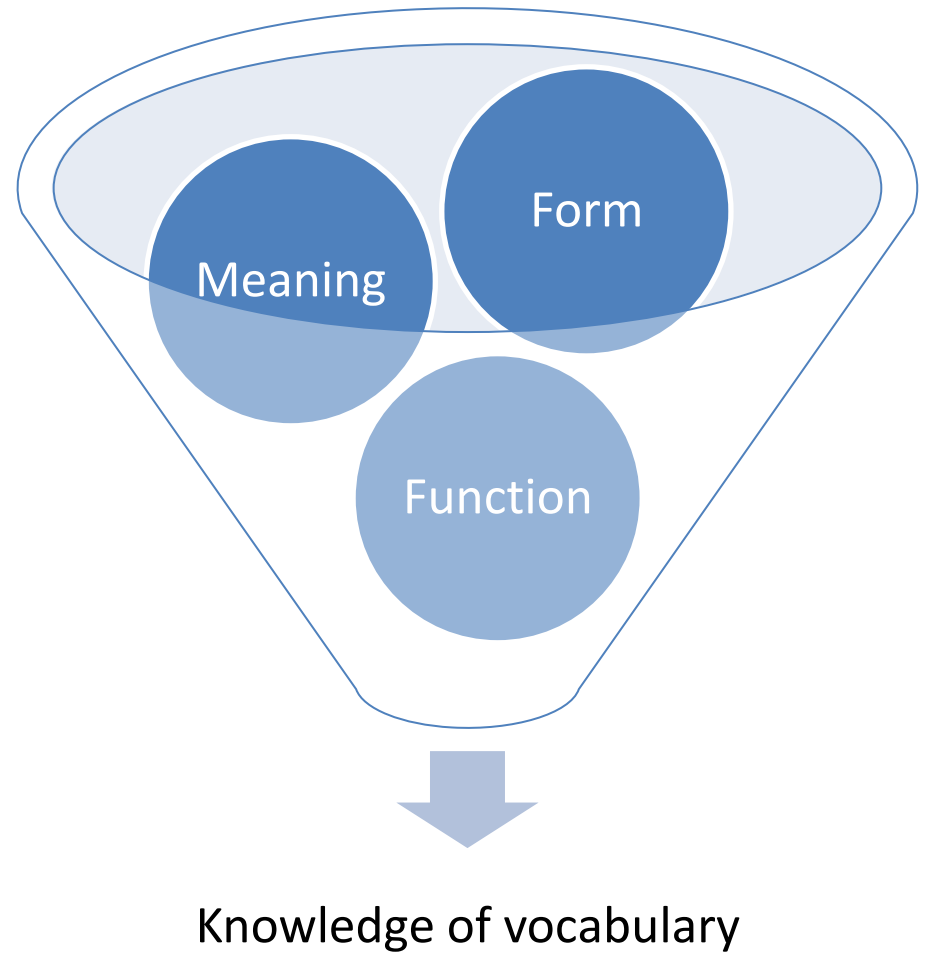
What does knowing a word actually mean? (1/2)

It means that we **can**:

- Recognise it in its spoken or written form.
- Recall it at will.
- Relate it to an appropriate object or concept.
- Use it in the appropriate grammatical form.
- Pronounce it in a recognisable way when speaking.
- Spell it correctly when writing.

What does knowing a word actually mean? (2/2)

- Use it in a collocationally appropriate way (with the words it correctly goes with).

- Use it at the appropriate level of formality.

- Be aware of its connotations and associations.

What does it mean to know a word?

A word is acquired when the learner can identify its meaning in and out of context and can use it appropriately and naturally in oral/written communication.

- **Receptive knowledge:** language items which can be recognised and comprehended in listening/reading material.

- **Productive knowledge:** language items which the learner can recognise, comprehend, recall and use appropriately in speech and writing.

Organising principles of lexis (1/5)

1. **Word structure**: i.e. Morphology.

Classifying words on the basis of meaning.

2. **Homonymy**: A single word form with several different meanings which are not related, e.g. bank, file, bat.

3. **Polysemy**: A single word form with several different but clearly related meanings, e.g. head, foot.

Organising principles of lexis (2/5)

4. **Metaphor**: Enables us to talk of one thing in terms of another. More specifically:

    - it enables us to conceptualise and talk about entities with vague boundaries or which are abstract.

    - it enables us to demonstrate relations which are not immediately obvious.

    - it is useful in expanding existing concepts and creating new ones, e.g. give me a hand, they bombarded me with objections, they attacked my position.

Organising principles of lexis (3/5)

5. Register/Style:

- Style refers to level of formality as well as humorous, ironic etc. style.

- Register: Varieties of language defined by their topic and context of use (i.e. language of the law, of medicine, academic language), e.g. children, kids, minor, fag, cigarettes.

Organising principles of lexis (4/5)

Classifying words on the basis of sense relations:

7. **Synonymy**: Two or more words that have similar meaning, e.g. begin/start, below/beneath/under.

8. **Antonymy**: Refers to items which are opposite in meaning:

   – ungradable antonyms: forms which truly represent oppositeness of meaning and cannot be graded, e.g. dead, alive.

   – gradable antonyms: forms which have many degrees in between, e.g. hot, cold.

Organising principles of lexis (5/5)

9. Hyponymy: Expresses the relationship of inclusion. Organises words into taxonomies. e.g.:

– fruit,

– orange, apple, banana,

– Cox's Golden Delicious etc.

10. Collocation: When two items co-occur or are used together frequently they are said to collocate.

Structural approaches to ELT

- Vocabulary was thought to be the easiest component of language to acquire and no formal, explicit attention to vocabulary was given.

Communicative approaches to ELT (1/2)

- Vocabulary is viewed as central to the language acquisition process.

- Solid vocabulary base necessary at every stage of the language learning process.

- Communication can not happen in any meaningful way without vocabulary.

Communicative approaches to ELT (2/2)

- In the early stages of language learning, learners are better served by vocabulary – one can bypass grammar when going for meaning.

- "No matter how well the student learns grammar, no matter how successfully the sounds of L2 are mastered, without words to express a wider range of meanings, communication in an L2 just cannot happen in any meaningful way" (McCarthy, 1990).

Principles of Developing Vocabulary (1/2)

- Active and positive student participation (Carr & Wixson, 1986).

- Personal engagement with a new word (Dole, Sloan & Trathen, 1995).

- Opportunities for students to discuss new words

- Teaching vocabulary before reading (National Reading Panel, 2000).

- Learning in rich contexts, incidental learning, and the use of computer technology (National Reading Panel, 2000).

Principles of Developing Vocabulary (2/2)

- Relating vocabulary to background knowledge.

- Building relationships.

- Developing depth of meaning.

- Presenting several exposures.

- Creating an interest in words.

- Teaching students how to learn new words.

The importance of vocabulary knowledge (1/2)

- Vocabulary knowledge is strongly related to overall reading comprehension.

- If a word is decoded and pronounced but the meaning is not recognized, comprehension will be impaired.

- If a word is not recognized automatically and efficiently (fluently), comprehension, may also be affected.

- Learning is incremental as all parts of a word can't be learned simultaneously (Schmitt, 2000).

The importance of vocabulary knowledge (2/2)

- Receptive knowledge happens before productive (Nation, 2001).

- It is easier to forget a word than remember it. Of 10 new words, it is normal to forget most of them within a few days.

- Teaching a word does not mean it will be learned. It takes 5-16 encounters to learn an average word.

Learning

THE LEARNING CONE (EDGAR DALE 1969)
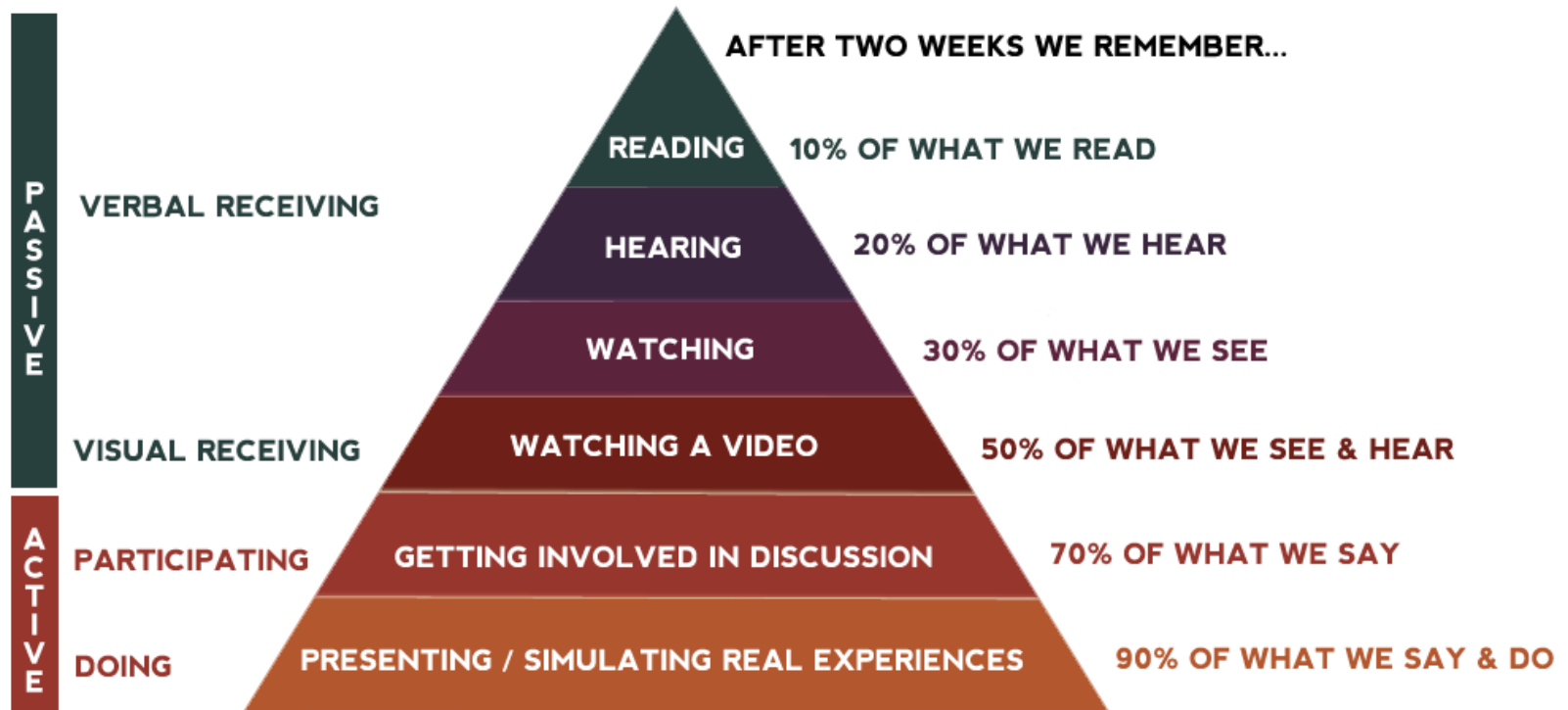
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When do students store vocabulary into memory?

Students store vocabulary into memory when they can:

- **Link** words with what they know.

- **Say** what they think key words mean.

- **Create** their own definitions.

- **Visualise** pictures of the words.

- **Act** out words.

CODE (1/3)

- Students remember vocabulary when the word is strongly **CONNECTED** to what they already know and have experienced.

CODE (2/3)

- **Students remember more information when it is clearly organized:** When vocabulary is **ORGANIZED**, specific words are easier to identify, recall quickly, and be remembered over longer periods of time. Students who have no system of organizing new vocabulary find it difficult to manage and remember the many individual and unconnected bits of information. When words are categorized by common threads and linked to the over-arching structure of a unit, students see how the terms fit together to form a bigger picture.

CODE (3/3)

- Students remember vocabulary when it is **DEEPLY** processed through visual, auditory, physical, or emotional experiences

- Students remember vocabulary when they are given the opportunity to **EXPLORE** or think about it in a variety of ways.

Storing words in short term and long term memory
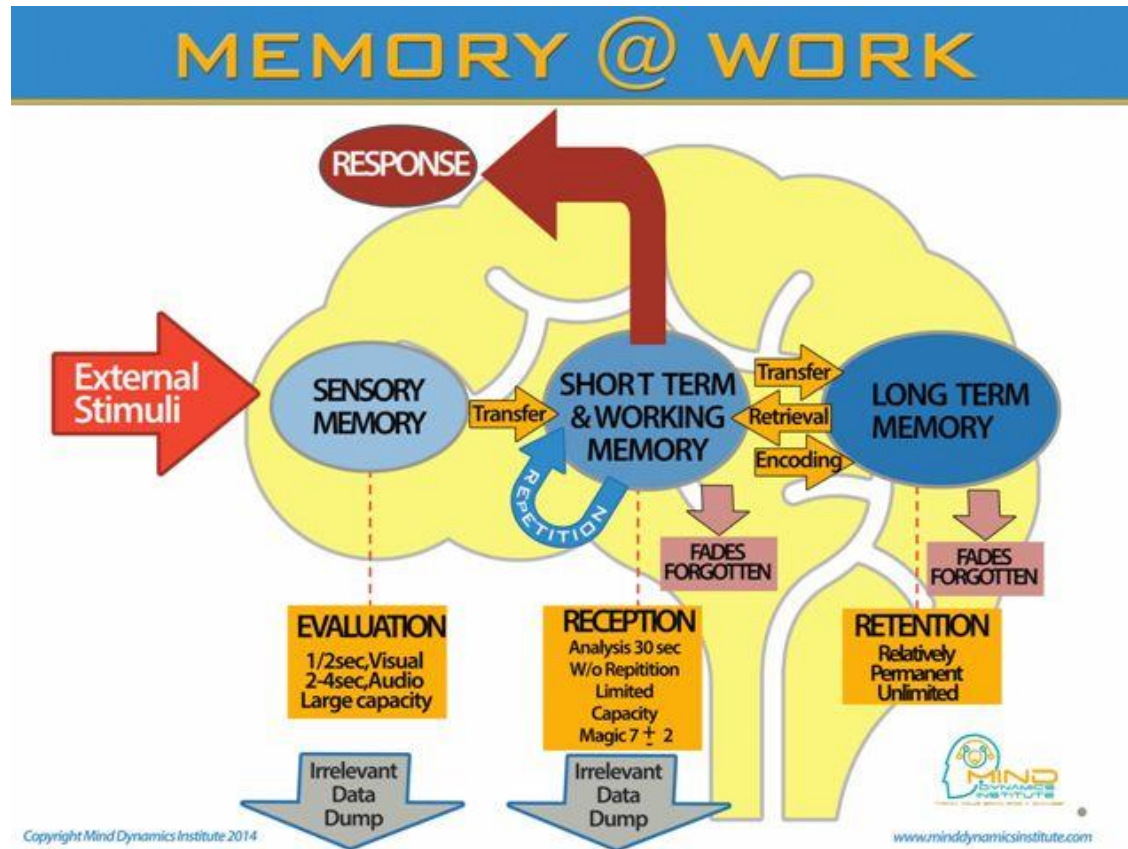
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Vocabulary practice (1/2)

Unreliable Practices:

- Asking students, "Does anyone know what _____ means?".

- Numerous independent activities without guidance or immediate feedback.

- Directing students to "look it up" then use it in a sentence.

- Relying on context-based guessing as a primary strategy.

Vocabulary practice (2/2)

Research based practices:

- Teacher directed, explicit instruction.

- Provide opportunities to practice using words.

- Teach word meanings explicitly and systematically.

- Teach independent word learning strategies (i.e., contextual strategies & morphemic analysis).

Three approaches to vocabulary instruction (1/3)

Incidental learning: teacher provides learners with opportunities for extensive reading and listening.

- Indirect instruction happens when teachers purposely expose students to a wide variety of literary sources by creating a literate-rich learning environment, and occurs naturally when students read, write, talk, and listen to each other on a daily basis.

Three approaches to vocabulary instruction (2/3)

Explicit instruction: diagnosing words learners need to learn, presenting meaning of words, practising the use of new words, developing fluency with known words.

- Direct instruction includes those times when a teacher systematically demonstrates how to determine the meanings of words or when the teacher leads the students to specific tools for discovering meaning.

Three approaches to vocabulary instruction (3/3)

Independent strategy instruction: training students in strategies for vocabulary acquisition (guessing meaning from context, training learners to use dictionaries).

Teach students to learn words independently

- Teach strategies for learning unknown words.

- Teach students to use the dictionary and thesaurus.

- Have students express themselves in writing and speech throughout the day.

Learning how to learn words (1/2)

Morphemic Analysis:

- Prefixes,

- Suffixes,

- Root Words.

Prefix	Root word	Suffix
un-	confort-	-able
in/ir-	regular	-ly
dis-	organise	-ed
un-	confident	-ly
dis-	respect	-fully

Affixes

- Prefixes augment the meaning of words.

- Suffixes change the part of speech of words to which they are attached.

- Prefix "un" accounts for 26% of total number of prefixed words.

- More than half (51%) of the prefixed words have "un", "re" and "in"(not).

- Four prefixes (un, re, in and dis) account for 58% of prefixed words!

Learning how to learn words (2/2)

- Contextual Analysis:
  - Explicit Explanation or Definition.
  - Appositives.
  - Synonyms.
  - Function Indicators.
  - Examples.
  - Comparison-contrast.
  - Classification.
  - Experience.

- Dictionary Usage:
  - Using glossaries.
  - Using dictionaries.
  - English learner dictionaries.

Using concept questions (1/2)

When you are constructing concept questions, the target structure must not appear in the concept questions. For example, the concept question for 'I've lived here for three years' is not 'have you lived here for three years?' or 'How long have you lived here?'. You can't check that a student understands a structure with a question that includes that structure.

So the concept questions are:

- When did you start living here? (Three years ago.)

- Do you still live here? (Yes.)

Using concept questions (2/2)

- Let's think about being reluctant. I will say some things and if you think you would be reluctant to do it, say "reluctant." If not, say "no!"
  - Holding a tarantula spider.
  - Petting a kitten.
  - Jumping out of a tall tree.
- If I told you that it was time for gym class but you were reluctant to go, what would you look like? Act like you are feeling reluctant to go to gym.

Step 1: Presenting new words

Using visual images

Other techniques

Using gestures and actions

Presenting new words

Guessing/ Predicting

Words in context

Showing lexicial relations

Using visual images

realia

pictures

masking

drawing
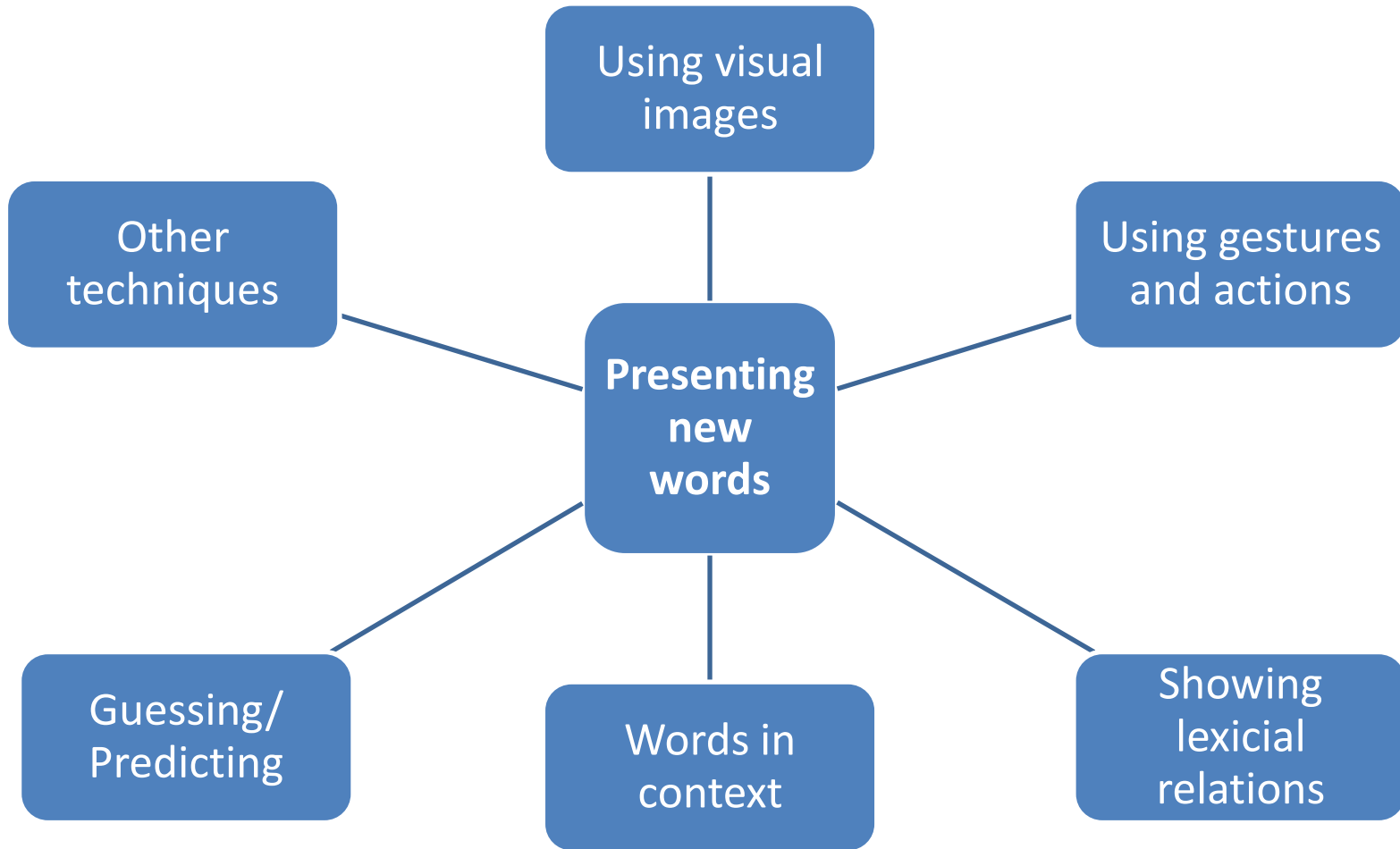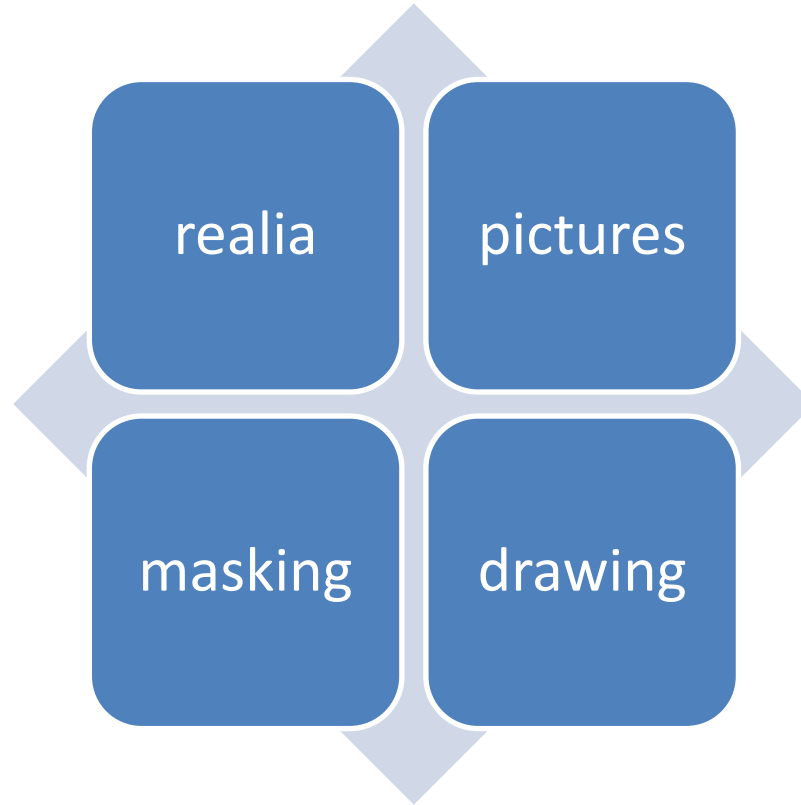
Using gestures and actions

- Mime.

- Gesture.

- Facial expression.

- Action.

[5]

Showing lexical relations

- Synonyms

- Antonyms

- Collocation

Word: **acceptable**

Synonyms:
- satisfactory
- okay
- usual
- standard
- normal

Antonyms:
- unacceptable
- annoying
- improper
- horrible
- awful

Using concept maps

Words in context

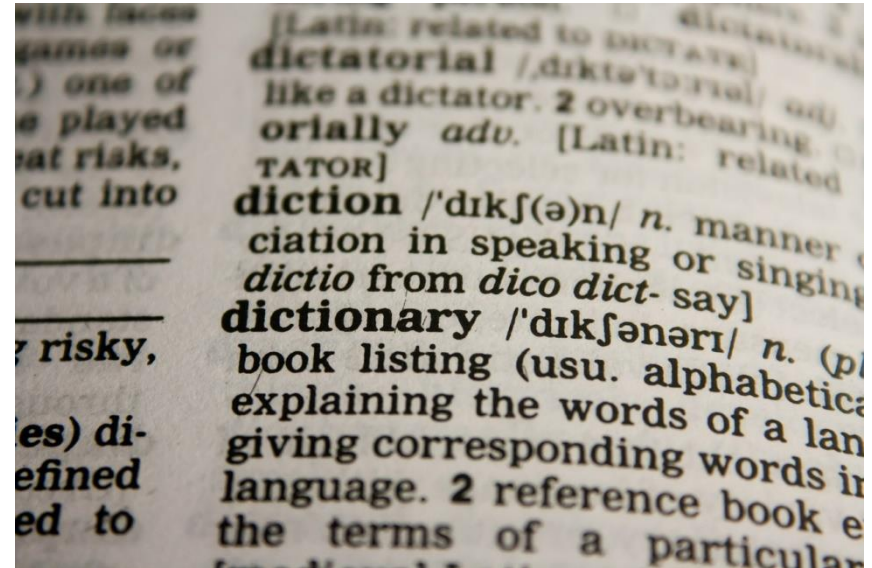- Dialogues.
- Role play.
- Drama.
- Stories.
- Songs.
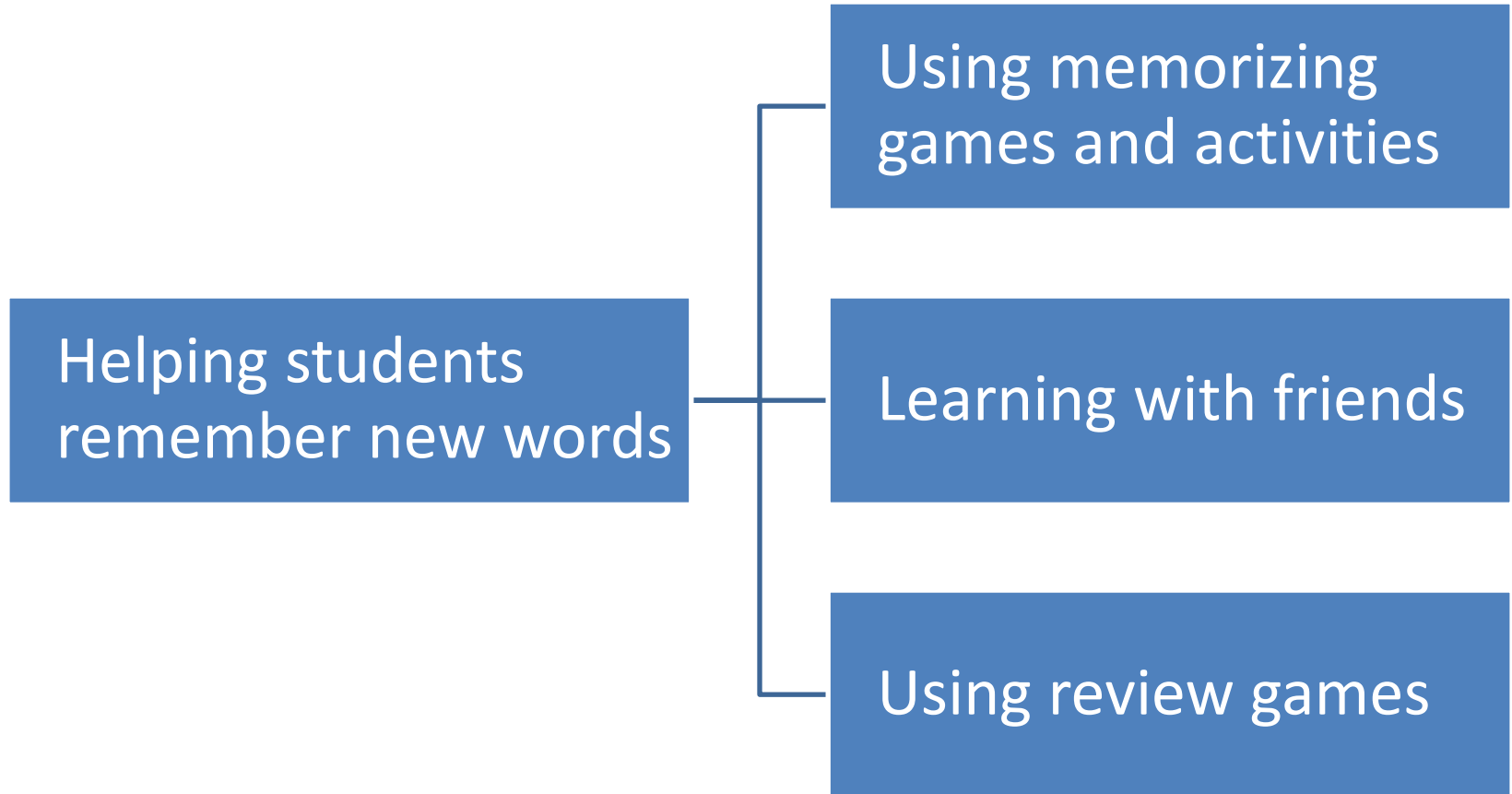- Rhymes & poems.
- Videos.

[6]

Other techniques

- Using a dictionary.
- Explaining.
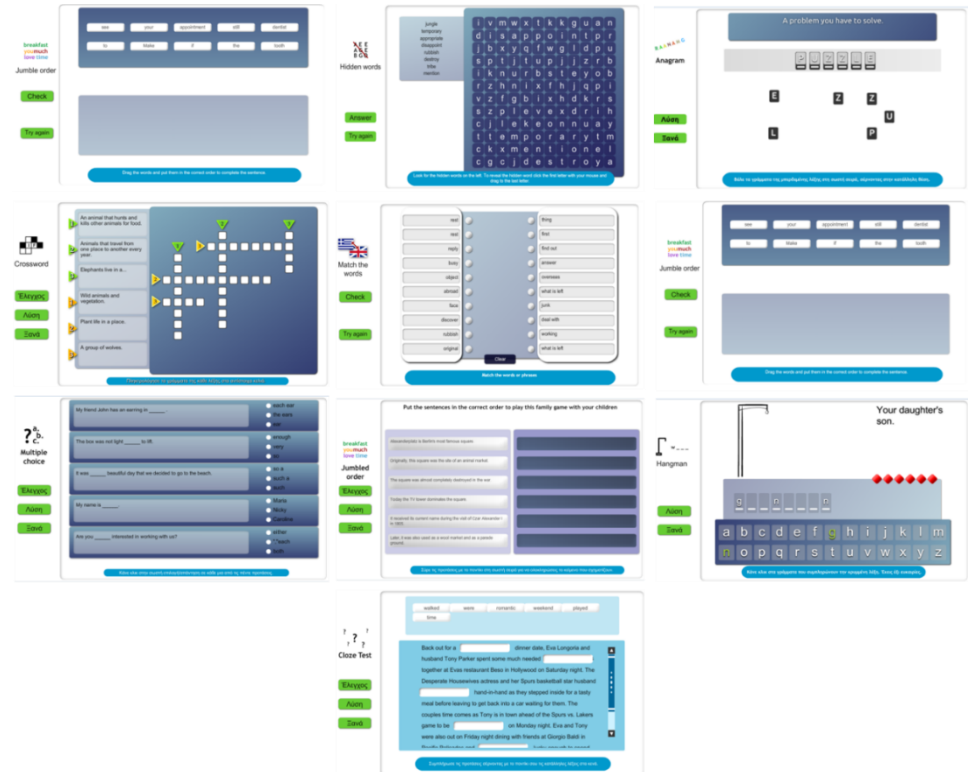- Describing.
- Defining the context.
- Translating.

[7]

Step 2: Helping students remember new words

Helping students remember new words

- Using memorizing games and activities
- Learning with friends
- Using review games

Using memorizing games and activities

- Picture dictation.

- Matching words.

- Labelling words.

- Searching words.

- Sequencing words.

- Guessing words.

- Eliminating words.

- Classifying words.

[8]

Review Games

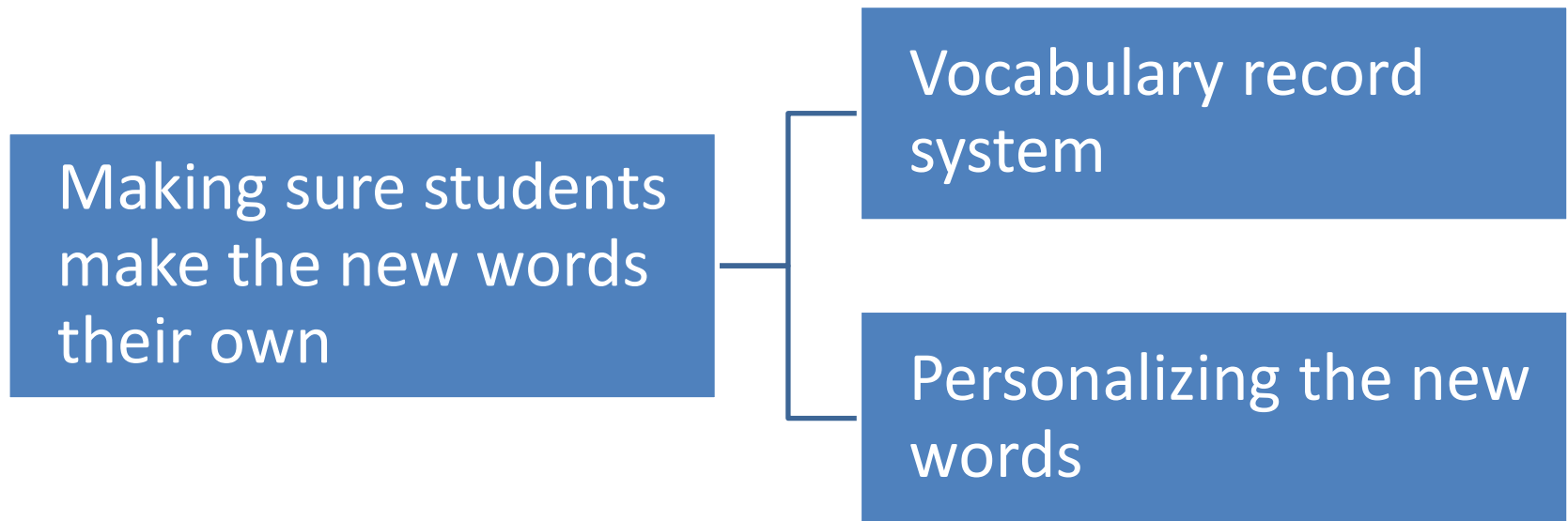- Picture labelling.

- Crosswords.

- Bingo.

- Dominoes.

- Puzzles.

[9]

Step 3: Making sure students make the new words their own

Making sure students make the new words their own

Vocabulary record system

Personalizing the new words

Vocabulary record system

- Personal dictionary (word notebooks):
  - marking word stress,

  - adding pictures,

  - putting an L1 translation,

  - putting the word into context,

  - adding a synonym,

  - mapping a word family.

Personalize the new words

- Keeping a learning log (blogs).

- Keeping a diary (blogs).

- Creative writing by using newly-learned words or phrases.

- Looking for recently learned words in storybooks, the Internet, the newspapers, etc., and noticing how they are used.

Some ideas for Vocabulary Activities (1/9)

[10]

Multiple Choice Activities.

Some ideas for Vocabulary Activities (2/9)

True- False Activities.

Bedroom vocabulary

The sentences describe things you can find in a bedroom.
Decide if they are true or false.

A duvet is thicker than a blanket.	True False
Blinds are an alternative to curtains - they also keep out light and cold from your room.	True False
A blanket is thinner than a sheet.	True False
You wear pyjamas on your feet.	True False
A single bed is bigger than a double bed.	True False
Some people have an alarm clock on their mobile phone.	True False
Your rest your head on a pillow.	True False
You can find bunk beds on ships.	True False
A bedside table is bigger than a dining room table.	True False
You use a wardrobe to cover your bed.	True False

✔ Check Answer   🏁 Submit   ↻ Reset

[11]

Some ideas for Vocabulary Activities (3/9)

Cross the odd one out.

1. Which word is different?
   - a. flat
   - b. house
   - c. apartment
   - d. beach

2. Which word is different?
   - a. desk
   - b. briefcase
   - c. chair
   - d. table

3. Which word is different?
   - a. banana
   - b. apricot
   - c. cherry
   - d. sherry

4. Which word is different?
   - a. walk
   - b. run
   - c. sneeze
   - d. sprint

Some ideas for Vocabulary Activities (4/9)

Matching definitions.

Words	Definitions
1. benefits	a. (noun) inability or unwillingness to change
2. consequences	b. (noun) disadvantages; losses or penalties incurred in gaining something
3. costs	c. (noun) advantages; things that promote well-being
4. inflexibility	d. (noun) things that happen as a result of an action
5. security	e. (verb) to acquire or come into (usually sth undesirable)
6. incur	f. (noun) the condition of being protected from harm
7. freedom	g. (noun) the right to use or enjoy something without restriction

Some ideas for Vocabulary Activities (5/9)

Taking one more step, we move from 'pure' vocabulary exercises, to tasks that enhance learners' language awareness:

- A kind of conscious perception.
- Sensitivity to language.
- Essentially a thinking process.
- Explicit & implicit knowledge about language.
- Being aware of the nuances as well as the meaning of language items.
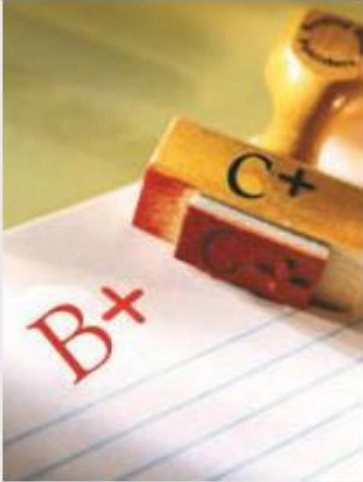- Emphasis on context.
- Holistic.

Some ideas for Vocabulary Activities (6/9)

Multiple Matching (word pool - no gap).

Match the underlined words in the text below (items 7-11) with a word that has a similar meaning in this context (options A-F). There is one option you do not need.

A. purpose	**B.** idea	**C.** skills	**D.** behaviour	**E.** success	**F.** poor performance

Articles   36

School Reports 'not tough enough' - report.

School reports are often not honest enough and give parents the wrong impression of their children's **(7)** <u>ability</u> according to a study published in the journal *Education Today*. The authors of the study say teachers sometimes do not know how to write reports; they usually don't understand the **(8)** <u>aim</u> of the report.

School reports should help pupils improve their work but many teachers do not give a clear **(9)** <u>picture</u> of the pupil's strengths and **(10)** <u>weaknesses</u>. 'Many reports are too positive and pupils often think their grades are better than they really are'. There is a problem at both primary and secondary school where teachers need more support with how to write reports.

Teachers discuss children's marks with parents but it is difficult to be honest face-to-face. Some children not only fail to do well on tests but also have **(11)** <u>discipline</u> problems.

[12]

Some ideas for Vocabulary Activities (7/9)

Read the text and for each gap (12-16) choose the best option (A-F). Use each option once only. There is one option you do not need.

A.	contains	B.	causes	C.	tastes	D.	does	E.	helps	F.	avoids

Sweet News for Chocoholics

Good news for chocoholics. The treat loved by millions not only (12)_____ delicious but, according to the latest research findings, it also (13)_____ you good. The reason for this is that chocolate (14)_____certain substances such as flavonoids that are good for your heart; they also help to cut down blood clotting which (15)_____heart attacks. 'Research indicates that eating chocolate can have a positive effect on health', said Dr. Carl Ritter of the University of New York. 'Research shows that cocoa is a bit like aspirin: it (16)_____ reduce heart attacks'. The Conference on diet and health begins this Saturday in New York at the Rockefeller Center.

[13]

Multiple Matching (word pool - with gap).

Some ideas for Vocabulary Activities (8/9)

Using Reading as an impetus for Language Awareness tasks – identifying meaning within context.

6.3 Decide which of the options (A, B, or C) best explains the meaning of the underlined word or expression in each statement (from Texts 1 and 2) in items 46-50.

46. This – meaning Malaysia – is a land of <u>superlatives</u> and statistical extremes.
   A. exceptional   B. unrivalled   C. atrocities

47. Its population density is <u>but a fraction of</u> those countries that surround it.
   A. slightly smaller than   B. about the same as   C. much less than

48. …I saw that an enormously fat wild boar with razor sharp tusks was busy <u>trashing</u> my balcony, angry about something.
   A. littering   B. damaging   C. cluttering

49. I can't think of any other country besides Malaysia where watching wildlife <u>teem</u> about you is so easy and satisfying, so rewarding in an ecological, gustatory sense.
   A. disperse   B. swarm   C. reverse

50. The country has somehow managed to combine relentless and remarkable economic progress with a concern for the environment and a stately refusal to <u>countenance</u> the bad side of mass-market tourism.
   A. allow   B. reject   C. keep up

[14]

Some ideas for Vocabulary Activities (9/9)

Use the correct form of the words in parentheses in statements 46-50, as in the example.
Χρησιμοποίησε τη σωστή μορφή των λέξεων σε παρένθεση στις προτάσεις 46-50, όπως στο παράδειγμα.

Strange but true! Did you know...?

- ❖ People say the most **(EX)** _beautiful_ (beauty) flower in the world is the rose!

- ❖ The most **(46)** _____ (relax) colours for people are green and blue!

- ❖ The least **(47)** _____ (beauty) colours for kids are grey and black!

- ❖ English people spend more money on **(48)** _____ (garden) than on any other hobby!

- ❖ Ten million bricks were used to build North America's tallest **(49)** _____ (build) in 1931!

- ❖ More people use a blue **(50)** _____ (tooth) than a red one to clean their teeth!

[15]

Short-answer/Fill-in (morphology-derivation).

Online Resources

- [Teaching Vocabulary: Two Dozen Tips and Techniques](#)

- [English Vocabulary Word Lists with Games, Puzzles and Quizzes](#)

- [LearnEnglishKids](#)

- An authoring tool: [Hot Potatoes](#)

Selecting Vocabulary for Instruction (1/3)

- Which words are most important to understanding the text?

- How much prior knowledge will students have about this word or its related concept?

- Is the word encountered frequently?

- Does the word have multiple meanings?

- Is the concept significant and does it therefore require pre teaching?

Selecting Vocabulary for Instruction (2/3)

- Which words can be figured out from the context?

- Are there words that could be grouped together to enhance understanding a concept?

- What strategies could I employ to help students integrate the concept (and related words) into their lives?

Selecting Vocabulary for Instruction (3/3)

- How can I make repeated exposures to the word/concept productive and enjoyable?

- How can I help students use the word/concept in meaningful ways in multiple contexts?

Summing up: Practical implications of vocabulary acquisition research (1/3)

- Incidental vocabulary learning should be accompanied by explicit vocabulary instruction.

- Provide students with meaningful tasks which require them to analyse and process language more deeply.

- Encourage repetition and memorisation of words for students to commit words to short term memory.

Summing up: Practical implications of vocabulary acquisition research (2/3)

- Provide a number of encounters with a word through different activities and contexts.

- Integrate new words with old.

- Both formal and semantic aspects of words need to be given attention to in the teaching/learning process.

- Facilitate imaging of words. Visual images can facilitate memory and can fix new items into our memory.

Summing up: Practical implications of vocabulary acquisition research (3/3)

- Try to present vocabulary in an organised manner.

- Use of a variety of techniques and tasks.

- Train students in the art of exploiting contextual information in deducing the meaning of unknown words.

- Encourage independent learning.

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End of Unit

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Notes

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