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ՀԵՏԱԶՈՏԱԿԱՆ ԱՇԽԱՏԱՆՔ

ԹԵՄԱ   ”Developing Lexical Competence at Secondary School”

ԱՌԱՐԿԱ   Անգլերեն

ՀԵՂԻՆԱԿ   Շողիկ Գրիգորյան

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Content

Introduction

A general aim in education today is that a competence-based approach emplies an essential shift in methodology and understanding content in language need to be based on a common philosophy of teaching and this implies a certain continuity and coherence in methodology.

Achieving communicative competence in second language can be enhanced by developing vocabulary learning and teaching. Similarly, problems in vocabulary learning and teaching can have serious negative effects on learner's success in second language learning.

It is generally acknowledged among language teachers and learners that vocabulary is considered by both first-language and second-language researchers as an essential factor in language competence.

The aim of the research is to develop the learners' communicative and linguistic competences through the development of vocabulary, to examine and describe types of vocabulary learning strategies.

The objectives of the present paper are

- to explore the principles of language education policy
- to identify the concept of competences
- to develop the learners' communicative and linguistic competences
- to develop strategies of teaching vocabulary

The novelty of the research work is

- to provide a basis for the development of communicative and lexical competences
- to promote evaluation and self-assessment
- to give the description of lexical competence and its components based on the CEFR
- to identify the peculiarities and relevance of productive and receptive vocabulary.

The relevance of the research is explained by the importance of mastering several foreign languages in modern multilingual society.

The theoretical value of the research is determined by the necessity of the detailed analysis of the methodology of developing lexical competence and the strategies of teaching vocabulary in classrooms.

The practical value is important and useful for both language teachers and learners because it will highlight the use of vocabulary learning strategies, shed light on the conceptions of vocabulary learning, and reflect upon the beliefs regarding strategies for learning and acquiring vocabulary minimum. Language teachers may be able to make use of the findings to improve their vocabulary teaching and they may also be able to help change their approach to vocabulary learning of their students. Moreover, language learners can consider different vocabulary learning strategies that can appropriately improve their knowledge of vocabulary.

In order to design a coherent lexical competence model we have to take into consideration the general aims of education formulated within European education policy profile, the content and methodology that are relevant for the development of the lexical competence as a whole.

New Trends of Language Education Policy

1.1 Methodological Model of Lexical Competence

Today the aim of language education is profoundly modified. It is no longer seen as simply to achieve 'mastery' of one or two, or even three languages, each taken in isolation.

Instead, the aim is to develop a linguistic repertoire, in which all linguistic abilities have a place. This implies, that the languages offered in educational institutions should be diversified and students given the opportunity to develop a plurilinugual competence (CEFR, 5).

Lexical competence in a second language can be described in four different ways: with respect to what is known about words, how well words are known, how many words are known, and which words are known.

Lexical competence consists of lexical elements and grammatical elements. (CEFR, 2001, 110-111)

Lexical elements include:

Fixed expressions, consisting of several words, which are used and learnt as wholes.

Fixed expressions include:

·Sentential formulae, including:

direct exponents of language functions such as greetings, proverbs, relict archaisms,

· Phrasal idioms, often: semantically opaque, frozen metaphors, intensifiers. Their use is often contextually and stylistically restricted,

·Fixed frames, learnt and used as unanalysed wholes, into which words or phrases are inserted to form meaningful sentences,

· other fixed phrases, such as: phrasal verbs, compound prepositions,

· fixed collocations, consisting of words regularly used together,

Single word forms. A particular single word form may have several distinct meanings. Single word forms include members of the open word classes: noun, verb, adjective, adverb, though these may include closed lexical sets.

Grammatical elements belong to closed word classes:

articles *(a, the)*

quantifiers (*some, all, many, etc.)*

demonstratives (*this, that, these, those*)

personal pronouns (*I, we, he, she, it, they, me, you, etc.*)

question words and

relatives (*who, what, which, where, how, etc.*)

possessives (*my, your, his, her, its, etc.*)

prepositions (*in, at, by, with, of, etc.*)

auxiliary verbs *(be, do, have, modals*)

conjunctions (*and, but, if, although*)

particles (e.g. *in German: ja, wohl, aber, doch, etc.*)

One way to describe lexical competence is to describe what the learner knows about words. It is widely accepted now that there are many types or 'dimensions' of knowledge to be learnt about each word.

Another way to define lexical competence is to specify the number of words known, i.e. the size of vocabulary. The number of words known to a learner needs to be interpreted, however, in comparison to the number of words known to a native speaker. This is unfortunate since vocabulary size is offered as one of the parameters of lexical competence alongside range and control in the C.E.F. and is also one of the most frequently used measures of vocabulary knowledge. (Council for Cultural Cooperation, 2001, 150)

Finally, lexical competence can be described by specifying the words within the whole vocabulary of a language that is known or should be known at a particular point in the process of learning a language. The end point of learning second language vocabulary is not the whole of the lexicon as there is no single native speaker who knows each and every single word in his native language. Therefore, some

specification of the target vocabulary is necessary. The main criterion that the specified words should meet is conduciveness to communication. A number of criteria have been suggested in the literature for the selection of vocabulary that would be most useful for successful communication in a second language. These are frequency, coverage, range and availability (White, 1988, 49).

According to Merea (Merea, 1996, 14-15) lexical competence might not be such an intractable idea as it is sometimes made out to be. Traditionally, people have attempted to describe lexical competence in terms of a specification of all the knowledge that speakers might have about words in their lexicons – a fully specified model of the way individual words work in the language. The crucial idea is that lexical competence is probably not just the sum of speakers' knowledge of the items their lexicons contain. There might be some advantage to be gained from backpedalling on this itembased approach to lexical competence, and from considering lexical competence in terms of a small number of global properties, rather than an accumulation of attributes of individual words.

Target vocabulary levels are specified in terms of themes 'required for the achievement of communicative tasks relevant to the learner's needs'. These are given under the descriptors for vocabulary range although the term vocabulary range is used in a non-technical sense referring to the vocabulary to be covered in the description. (http://culture.coe.int/portfolio)

Illustrative scales are available for the range of vocabulary knowledge, and the ability to control that knowledge. (C.E.F.R.2001, 112)

VOCABULARY RANGE

2	C	Has a good command of a very broad lexical repertoire including idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms; shows awareness of connotative levels of meaning.

C1	Has a good command of a broad lexical repertoire allowing gaps to be readily overcome with circumlocutions; little obvious searching for expressions or avoidance strategies. Good command of idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms.
B2	Has a good range of vocabulary for matters connected to his/her field and most general topics. Can vary formulation to avoid frequent repetition, but lexical gaps can still cause hesitation and circumlocution.
B1	Has a sufficient vocabulary to express him/herself with some circumlocutions on most topics pertinent to his/her everyday life such as family, hobbies and interests, work, travel, and current events.
A2	Has sufficient vocabulary to conduct routine, everyday transactions involving familiar situations and topics.
	Has a sufficient vocabulary for the expression of basic communicative needs.
	Has a sufficient vocabulary for coping with simple survival needs.
A1	Has a basic vocabulary repertoire of isolated words and phrases related to particular concrete situations.

1.2 Stages of Introducing and Presenting Vocabulary

Vocabulary plays an important part in learning, understanding, and communicating in a language. It is useful if language learners understand the importance of vocabulary in successful communication and comprehension.

In vocabulary learning, the main goals should be focused on why language learners particularly learn vocabulary both in isolation and in context.

The basic reason for learning foreign languages that all people have in common is communication - communication in any mode. It is a two-sided process, which requires the ability to understand each other, to be able to code a message that someone wants to convey to someone else in a way, which will be comprehensible to the receiver and also appropriate to a concrete situation and status of all participants. Vice versa the person should be able to interpret a message that someone else is conveying to them. To acquire a good skill of communication in foreign language it is necessary to be familiar not only with vocabulary but also with language structures and above all with strategies for using them in right context according to concrete situations..(http://www.5school.at.ua/Teaching_vocabulary_tolearners)

Vocabulary typically refers mainly to single words and sometimes to very tightly linked two or three word combinations.

When new vocabulary is introduced, there is always a chance that it is not new to some of the pupils of the class. New words have to be introduced in such a way as to capture the students' attention and place the words in their memories. Puples need to be aware of techniques for memorizing large amounts of new vocabulary in order to progress in their language learning. Vocabulary learning can often be seen as a laborious process of memorizing lists of unrelated terms. However, there are many others much more successful and interesting ways to learn and teach vocabulary in the classroom.(Jeremy Harmer, 2007, 229)

The presentation of new vocabulary usually involves the talking, repeating, demonstrating, showing pictures, illustrating the new point until the class has grasped the meaning, and has some idea of the form. Consequently, it is very important to design suitable context in which to present the vocabulary, making sure that the context carries and shows the meaning. The presentation should create in the students the need, the desire to learn the new language. It must be concise, meaningful and straight to the point. It is very important to underline three stages of presenting vocabulary:

- Demonstration of the word (presentation of the meaning, form and usage),
- Control of understanding,
- Preliminary consolidation

The meaning of unfamiliar words can be conveyed in two main ways:

- **non-verbal**
- **verbal**

Non-verbal ways convey the meaning of unfamiliar words using visual aids: pictures, photographs, blackboard, drawings, objects, gestures, performing the action , etc.They bring the learner into direct contact with the words, establish links between a foreign word and the thing or the concept directly. Non-verbal ways are usually used when the words denote things, objects, gestures and movements which can be shown to and seen by the learners. For example, *a desk, a room, big, small, blue, to run, to read, to write, to laugh, to sit, to stand,* etc.

Verbal ways of conveying the meaning of unfamiliar words:

- a definition: all the words used in the definition should be known to the learners to be able to guess the meaning
- putting the word in a defining context or a sentence.
- using the word in a clear and comprehensible situation,
- giving a word in the opposite meaning(antonym)
- giving a word in the same meaning(synonym)
- analyzing word-building elements
- guessing from the context
- guessing from the similarity of the word in-the mother tongue.

Vocabulary typically refers mainly to single words and sometimes to very tightly linked two or three word combinations.If vocabulary is taught in an uninteresting way such as by drilling, simple repetition and learning lists, then the words are likely to be forgotten. Teachers need to teach vocabulary so that the words are learned in a memorable way, in order for them to stick in the memory of the student. Indeed, learners need to retain large amounts of vocabulary in their long-term memory.(Scriviner, 2005,186)

Vocabulary is a vital part of language teaching There is more to teaching a word than simply translating it or even using it in a sentence as an example. Knowing a word means knowing not only the meaning, but knowing the contexts in which that word is used, the words which are related to it and

where to use the word. It also requires knowing hidden implications that could be connected with the word. (http://www.myenglishlanguage.com/teacher-resources/teaching-vocabulary/)

Words with multiple meanings

Sometimes single words in English have different meanings, for example, the words *'drive', 'pool', 'stroke', 'bottom', 'fence', 'catch', 'strike', 'match'.*

Prefixes and suffixes

Prefixes can make a word negative, for example, adding *un-, a-* or *dis-* . These inflections are vital for students' understanding of words and can increase their vocabulary substantially simply by inflecting words they already know. Suffixes work in this same vocabulary enhancing way, by adding endings such as *–ing, -less*, and *-ly*. Teaching the prefixes and suffixes appropriate to new vocabulary can help students to guess what a new word might mean by reference to words they already know. In this way, prefixes and suffixes can help to introduce many new words easily. For example, knowledge of the word *"friend"* can help a student to guess the meanings of the words *"friendly", "unfriendly"* or "*friendless*". Teaching students the common prefixes and suffixes of the English language can help students to increase their vocabulary greatly by recognizing these other derived words.

Polysemy and Homonymy

When teaching vocabulary, there are subtle differences between similar words that needs to be communicated to the pupils in order to avoid causing confusion. Teaching polysemy enables the pupils to distinguish between the different meanings of a word with closely related meanings. For example*: a. John was a good man. He donated a lot of money to charity.*

b. Bill was a good painter. His drawings were exciting to look at.

Teaching homonymy distinguishes between the different meanings of a word with distinct meanings. For example*: a. My dog would always bark at mailmen.*

b. The tree's bark was a rusty brown.

The main aim of teaching vocabulary is assimilation of the meaning, form of the words and its usage in oral and written speech – that is formation of lexical habits. People can have many aptitudes, but without a large and precise English vocabulary to express them, they cannot take full

advantage of these abilities. Unlike aptitudes, vocabulary is not a natural ability; it can be improved if one is willing to make the effort to do so.   The fact is that many of the words were probably learned simply by coming across them often enough in reading, in conversation, and even while watching television. But increasing the pace of learning requires a consistent, dedicated approach. Learners need to have both active and passive vocabulary knowledge. That is, English words the learners will be expected to use themselves in original sentences, and those they will merely have to recognise when they hear them or see them written down by others.

Teaching passive vocabulary is important for comprehension – the issue of understanding another speaker needs the listener to have passive vocabulary, that is, enough knowledge of words used by others to comprehend their meaning. This is also called receptive knowledge of English.

Teaching active vocabulary is important for an advanced student in terms of their own creativity. This is because in order to create their own sentences, students need active vocabulary. Active vocabulary contains the words a student can understand and manipulate in order to use for their own personal expression. (http://www.myenglishlanguage.com/esl-students/learning-vocabulary/)

So vocabulary is an important part of the English teaching process. It is supposed to be a very effective communicative device as it carries the highest level of importance within peoples' verbal interaction.

Vocabulary knowledge is not something that can ever be fully mastered; it is something that expands and deepens over the course of a lifetime. Instruction in vocabulary involves far more than looking up words in a dictionary and using the words in a sentence. Vocabulary is acquired incidentally through indirect exposure to words and intentionally through explicit instruction in specific words and word-learning strategies. (http://www.readingrockets.org/article/9943)

Vocabulary learning strategies are a part of language learning strategies which in turn are a part of general learning strategies (Nation 2001, 217).

In order to learn and acquire vocabulary and enlarge vocabulary size, that is, knowing a large number of words with their meanings, or how to pronounce and use them correctly, language learners need to deal with a wide range of vocabulary learning strategies and every language learner has their own way for learning vocabulary. Vocabulary learning strategies will also be very different depending on

whether language learners' primary goal is to understand the language, either in reading or listening, or to produce it, either in speaking or writing. (Schmitt 2000, 133) states, "active learning management is important. Good language learners do many things such as use a variety of strategies, structure their vocabulary learning, review and practice target words and so on".

In classifying learning strategies, scholars have different ways of classifying language learning strategies (Intaraprasert 2004, 10). These classification systems give a crucial contribution to the knowledge of vocabulary strategies. The classification systems of vocabulary learning strategies have been identified in different contexts by different scholars:

Pemberton (2003) indicated that one of the biggest problems with vocabulary learning is that what is 'learned' today is often forgotten tomorrow, and most of the language learners seem to have all experienced this problem. He proposed a variety of strategies for vocabulary learning. There were two main categories in his vocabulary learning strategy classification, including strategies for learning vocabulary items, and strategies for reducing the 'forgetting problem. Vocabulary learning strategies classified by Pemberton (2003) seem to be the ways for some solutions to remember words for a long period of time, to learn them so well that they become 'known', and fixed in the learner's memory. Moreover, these strategies seem to promote language learners to individual exertion in their independent vocabulary learning.

For the first according to the topic of our research paper we identify four basic steps to a better vocabulary:

    1. Be Aware of Words

    2. Read

    3. Use a Dictionary

    4. Study and Review Regularly

While there are not any magic shortcuts to learning words, the larger your vocabulary becomes, the easier it will be to connect a new word with words you already know, and thus remember its meaning.

Word-learning strategies include dictionary use, morphemic analysis, and contextual analysis. For ELLs whose language shares cognates with English, cognate awareness is also an important strategy. Dictionary use teaches students about multiple word meanings, as well as the importance of choosing the appropriate definition to fit the particular context. Morphemic analysis is the process of deriving a word's

meaning by analyzing its meaningful parts, or morphemes. Such word parts include root words, prefixes, and suffixes. Contextual analysis involves inferring the meaning of an unfamiliar word by scrutinizing the text surrounding it. Instruction in contextual analysis generally involves teaching students to employ both generic and specific types of context clues.

Fostering word consciousness

A more general way to help students develop vocabulary is by fostering word consciousness, an awareness of an interest in words. Word consciousness is not an isolated component of vocabulary instruction; it needs to be taken into account each and every day. It can be developed at all times and in several ways: through encouraging adept diction, through word play, and through research on word origins or histories. "If we can get students interested in playing with words and language, then we are at least halfway to the goal of creating the sort of word-conscious students who will make words a lifetime interest."

Multiple exposures in multiple contexts

One principle of effective vocabulary learning is to provide multiple exposures to a word's meaning. There is great improvement in vocabulary when students encounter vocabulary words often. Students probably have to see a word more than once to place it firmly in their long-term memories. "This does not mean mere repetition or drill of the word," but seeing the word in different and multiple contexts. In other words, it is important that vocabulary instruction provide students with opportunities to encounter words repeatedly and in more than one context.

Restructuring of vocabulary tasks

Intentional instruction of vocabulary items is required for specific texts.

Repetition and multiple exposures to vocabulary items are important.Learning in rich contexts is valuable for vocabulary learning. Vocabulary tasks should be restructured as necessary. Vocabulary learning should entail active engagement in learning tasks.

Vocabulary can be acquired through incidental learning. How vocabulary is assessed and evaluated can have differential effects on instruction.

It is often assumed that when pupils do not learn new vocabulary words, they simply need to practice the words some more. Research has shown, however, that it is often the case that students simply

do not understand the instructional task involved. Rather than focus only on the words themselves, teachers should be certain that students fully understand the instructional tasks. The restructuring of learning materials or strategies in various ways often can lead to increased vocabulary acquisition, especially for low-achieving or at-risk students.

According to S. J. Molinsky (2001,7-10) there are a wealth of games, tasks, brainstorming, discussion, movement, drawing, miming, role-playing and other activities designed to take advantage of students' different learning styles and particular abilities and strengthes. These activities can be categorized based on the type of task involved:

1. Naming-activities based on saying vocabulary words

2. Identifying- activities based on identifying words from pictures

3. Categories-activities in which students categorize words according to their meaning

4. Clues- activities in which clues to the meaning of the words are given

5. Dialogs-activities in which words are practiced conversationally

6. Definitions- activities based on defining words

7. Associations- activities based on brainstorming associations with the vocabulary words

8. Connections- activities focused on relationship between the vocabulary words

9. Asking questions-activities in which students ask questions related to the words

10. Discussions- activities based on talking about the words

11. Research- activities based on finding out further further information about the vocabulary words

12. Extensions'- activities based on using vocabulary words in additional contexts

Conclusion

In the result of the present research paper we came to the following conclusions:

1. The aim of language education is to develop a linguistic repertoire, in which all linguistic abilities have a place.

2. The concept of plurilingualism has grown in importance in the Council of Europe's approach to language learning.

3. Vocabulary plays an important part in learning, understanding, and communicating in a language. It is useful if language learners understand the importance of vocabulary in successful communication and comprehension.

4. In vocabulary learning, the main goals should be focused on why language learners particularly learn vocabulary both in isolation and in context.

5. To acquire a good skill of communication in foreign language it is necessary to be familiar not only with vocabulary but also with language structures and above all with strategies for using them in right context according to concrete situations.

6. Vocabulary teaching should be part of the syllabus, and taught in a well-planned and regular basis.

7. The main aim of teaching vocabulary is assimilation of the meaning, form of the words and its usage in oral and written speech – that is formation of lexical habits.

8. Teachers can use devices for vocabulary teaching such as simple flash-cards or word-cards.

9. Teaching vocabulary can become easier with the use of cards with pictures, diagrams and liberal colour coding for grammatical clarity.

10. Once the new vocabulary has been taught, a useful way to test if students have understood the meanings of this new vocabulary is to ask them to match new words from one column with definitions from another column.

11. When teaching vocabulary, there are subtle differences between similar words that needs to be communicated to the students in order to avoid causing confusion. Teaching polysemy enables the student to distinguish between the different meanings of a word with closely related meanings; teaching homonymy distinguishes between the different meanings of a word with distinct meanings.

12. For the first according to the topic of our research paper we identify four basic steps to a better vocabulary:

1. Be Aware of Words

2. Read

3. Use a Dictionary

4. Study and Review Regularly

13. Learners need to have both active and passive vocabulary knowledge. That is, English words the learners will be expected to use themselves in original sentences, and those they will merely have to recognize when they hear them or see them written down by others.

14. Word-learning strategies include dictionary use, morphemic analysis, and contextual analysis.

15. Computer technology can be used effectively to help teach vocabulary.

16. Dependence on a single vocabulary instructional method will not result in optimal learning.

17. Pupils learn joyfully when vocabulary items are taught using different methods and implied in everyday situations.

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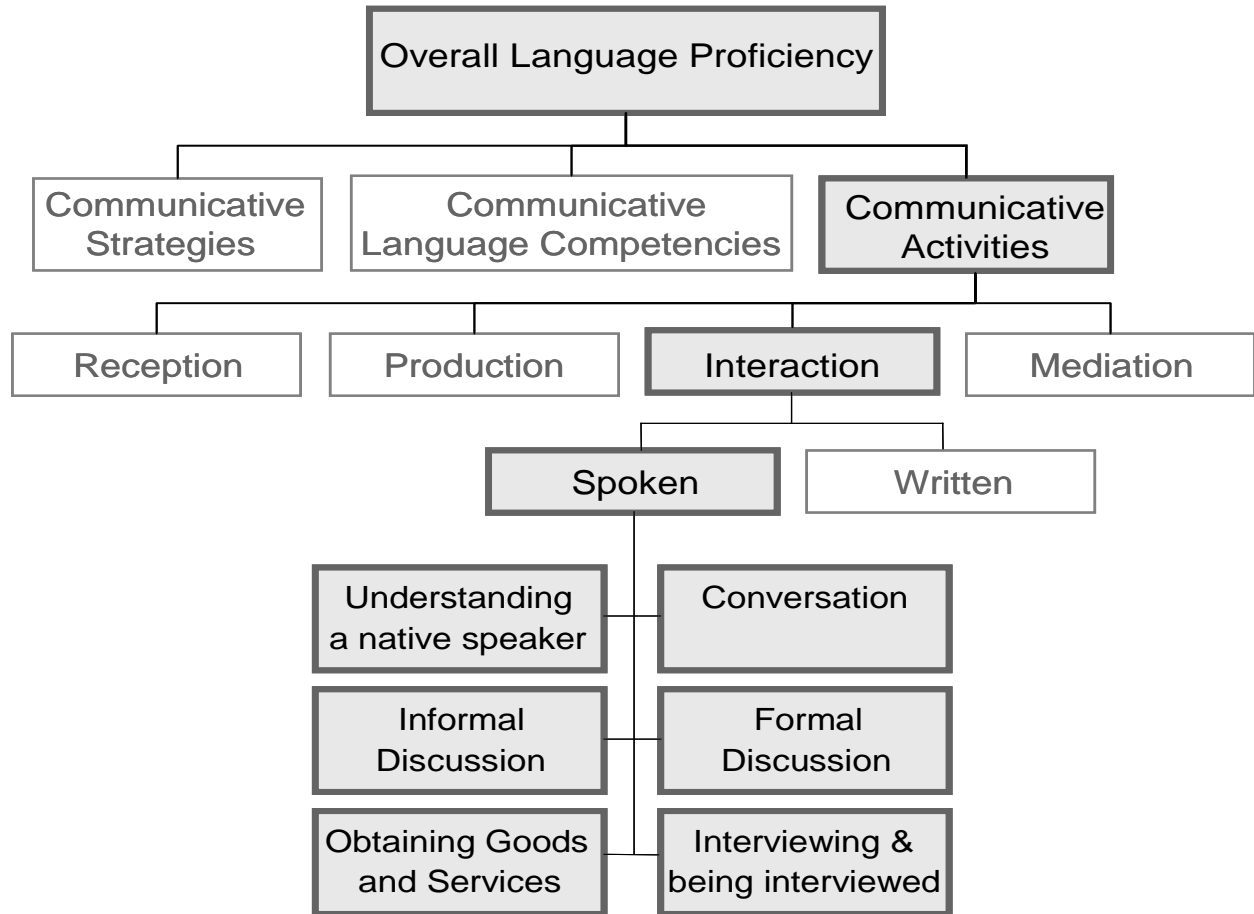12. cvc.cervantes.es/literatura/.../cauce24_33.pdf

Appendix

Appendix 1

The term 'communicative competence' was coined by sociolinguists to demonstrate that the use of non-standard linguistic forms in interaction may be appropriate to the particular situation that the participants find themselves in, and to the discursive goals that they are negotiating through their speech.

Appendix 2

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                    ┌─────────────────────────────────┐
                    │   Overall Language Proficiency  │
                    └─────────────────────────────────┘
          ┌───────────────────────┼───────────────────────┐
┌──────────────────┐  ┌───────────────────────┐  ┌──────────────────┐
│  Communicative   │  │     Communicative     │  │  Communicative   │
│    Strategies    │  │ Language Competencies │  │    Activities    │
└──────────────────┘  └───────────────────────┘  └──────────────────┘
   ┌──────────────┬──────────────┬──────────────┬──────────────┐
┌───────────┐ ┌───────────┐ ┌───────────┐ ┌───────────┐
│ Reception │ │Production │ │Interaction│ │ Mediation │
└───────────┘ └───────────┘ └───────────┘ └───────────┘
                        ┌──────────┴──────────┐
                  ┌───────────┐         ┌───────────┐
                  │  Spoken   │         │  Written  │
                  └───────────┘         └───────────┘
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Understanding a native speaker	Conversation
Informal Discussion	Formal Discussion
Obtaining Goods and Services	Interviewing & being interviewed

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Appendix 3

Word guessing games

The following games can be played throughout the school year but are also very useful as a round up at the end of term. You can play them a few times.

Guess the word (can be used for abstract nouns)

Choose five words relating to recent conversational themes. Write sets of clues to help students guess the words. Play with whole class or teams. Use one word per lesson over five lessons or use all words in one session as a longer game.

Example clues:

I am a noun but I am very important.

I begin with the letter 'f'.

People in prison have lost it and want it back.

People demand it when it is taken away by dictators.

It is related to speech.

(Puzzle word = Freedom)

Coffee Pot game (a very popular game in EFL)

This game is good for practising and reviewing action verbs and adverbs.

Ask one student to leave the room then the rest of the class choose a verb e.g. type, ski, fly.

The student returns to the room and asks questions to guess the verb.

The missing verb can be substituted with 'coffee pot'.

Example questions:

Why do you coffee pot?

Where do you coffee pot?

Do you coffee pot by yourself?

Do you need any special equipment for coffee potting?

Making it up - Phrasal verb stories

A persistent problem area for students is phrasal verbs. This story activity presents the verbs in a context helping the students to work out the meaning.

Preparation

Have each of the phrasal verbs from the story written on a piece of card, large enough for all the students to read. Have the verbs in their infinitive form e.g. to go out with / to turn up / to break down etc. Also make sure the pronoun is in the correct place depending on whether the verb can be separated from the particle or not e.g. to get on with something / to ask somebody in etc.

Procedure

- Read out the story to the class slowly using gestures and miming to help meaning. Place a phrasal verb on the board each time you say one.

- After each paragraph invite students, with your help, to repeat the story with you.

- Once all the story has been presented put students in pairs and, using the cards on the board as prompts, get students to tell each other the story. Monitor and after they have all tried to say the story get them to tell you it themselves without you saying a word.

- Keeping the students in pairs hand out the cards (have copies ready if you have a large class) so that each pair gets about 5 or 6 each. Working together the students have to make up a very short story using the verbs. Use the same verbs from the story. They can write the story down if they want.

- When they have finished students have a few minutes to remember their story so that they can tell it to somebody without looking.

- When the students have finished swap partners and get them to take it in turns to tell their story. The students should not be looking at their stories just remembering them. The listener can listen out for which phrasal verbs are being used.

- For consolidation/revision you can make a matching verb and definition exercise with the more difficult verbs:

to call (somebody) out	to have no more
to run out (of)	to leave suddenly, quickly, unexpectedly
to pop out	to telephone somebody in order to get help

Wall dictionary'

This is a good way to help pupils learn and review their vocabulary. It really helps them with the alphabet and spelling.

Procedure

- Prepare a colourful piece of paper which can be used as a background for the wall dictionary.
- Sew 26 pockets on it (or use glue/sticky tape) and label each pocket with a letter of the alphabet.
- Ask the children to prepare sets of letter cards by writing the 26 letters on some small pieces of paper. They put their letters into the pockets as soon as they can.
- We can use this wall dictionary at any time to practise spelling.
- For example, divide the class into three or four groups. They listen to words and then choose letters from the pockets to spell the words.

Word grid

This is an activity which is useful to highlight the problem and to move students' knowledge of the word on to beyond what the word means.

Preparation

Collect together a list of words your students have learnt recently and some quick definitions of the word. Draw a large grid on the board.

Procedure

- Read out one of the definitions and see if the students can remember the word. As students guess the words write them up on the board in one of the spaces on the grid. You can make this stage more competitive by putting students into groups and awarding points.

- Keep reading out definitions and getting the students to guess the words until the grid is completely full of words. Then put the students into pairs or small groups and get each group to choose two of the words from the grid. Try to make sure that each group has different words and that as many of the words as possible from the grid are chosen.

- Once the groups have chosen their words, tell them that they must write a single sentence that uses both words and that you will award points for the most interesting sentences. At this point it's better to focus them on the creativity rather than accuracy of the sentences.

- Once all the groups have written their sentences you could either get a volunteer to write each sentence on the board, or read the sentences out. At this point you should award points for the sentences for their creativity and good use of the words.

- Try to involve the class in voting for the sentences that they like the most and awarding points. You could even make this more fun by having number cards for you or the students to hold up giving marks out of ten.

The memory game

This is an adaptation of the popular game we all played as children when we had to pick up matching pictures, but in this activity we use the two parts of collocations.

Preparation

During regular classes, note down the word combinations that come up. Then put each part of the collocation on 2 separates pieces of paper

Ozone	Layer
Oil	Spills
environmentally	Friendly
cut down	Trees
greenhouse	

Animal	Poaching
endangered	Species
Melting	polar ice-caps
Recycle	waste

The first part of each phrase should be written on one coloured sheet of paper or, if you haven't got coloured paper. Then with a different coloured pen, or paper, write the second part of the phrase.

Procedure

- Put all of the first parts of each phrase together, face down on the floor. Then mix up the second group of words / phrases face down in a separate group to the first.
- In groups students work together to pick up one piece of paper from each group so as to make a phrase from the previous class.
- As the students match them up incorrectly students start to recall the correct collocation or phrase.
- The activity is fun which also aids efficient memorising of the target language. The more opportunities we allow our students to see the words the more likely they are to actually have them 'stuck in their heads' for easy access at a later stage.

Vocabulary self-study activities

- Make your own word box
  - Use one card per word, with the English on one side and a translation on the other.
  - Test yourself with the cards, sort them into categories, play games with them.
- Find a good basic vocabulary word list, say of about 1 - 2000 words which are sorted according to subject areas.
  - Revise 8 words per day regularly. In your mind, try to lock the particular word onto the image of an object (e.g. 'influenza' - think of a person sneezing).
  - To practise, randomly pick a number of words and make up a simple, but probably crazy, story using the words. You can do the same with the words in your vocabulary box.
- Have a good general attitude towards words
  - Note down all new words.

- 'Fish for language' by going through life with an open eye and attentive ear.
- 'Soliloquize', i.e. translate along in your mind silently
    - as you are doing things (as if you were speaking to an imaginary friend by your side)
    - as you are listening to the news
    - as you watch people doing something
    - as you see any object around
- Read aloud to yourself from printed text.
    - Increase your exposure to words
    - Television
    - BBC Radio (shortwave world receiver)
    - Books
    - Magazines Newspapers (from UK/USA)
    - English-language films on video
    - Pop songs (wonderful for vocabulary and grammar!)
    - Correspondence with an English native speaker pen-friend

Quick revision games

Divide the class in two teams. Give each team a set of slips with five (or three or two, depending on their level) things they have to name.

Examples:

- Name five things that move
- Name five drinks
- Name five things you would be doing if you weren't here
- Name five ways to get rich
- Name five animals

A member of the team reads the category of things they have to name and the whole team shouts the words.

While team A is doing this, team B have to remain in silence. Then it's team B's turn.

Time each team. The faster team is the winner.

Category game

This activity can be used as a review. Students usually get very excited.

The teacher chooses a category (animals, colors, school objects, kitchen gadgets...) and each student has to say a word that belongs to that category.

If a student doesn't know, he / she stands up. Then, the teacher chooses another category the following student starts again. In the following round, the student who's standing will have another chance. If he / she can say a word that belongs to the new category, he / she can sit down.

It's a great game for revision and to get students tuned into the lesson topic. It may also be used to elicit from the student what they already know about a certain topic.

Hot seat

This is a good activity for getting your students going in the morning. It is also excellent for revising vocabulary.

- First, split your class into different teams (two is best, but if you have a large class, any number could be used).
- Sit the students facing the board.
- Then take an empty chair - one for each team - and put it at the front of the class, facing the team members. These chairs are the 'hot seats'
- Then get one member from each team to come up and sit in that chair, so they are facing their team-mates and have their back to the board.
- As the teacher, have a list of vocabulary items that you want to use in this game.
- Take the first word from that list and write it clearly on the board.

- The aim of the game is for the students in the teams to describe that word, using synonyms, antonyms, definitions etc. to their team-mate who is in the hot seat - that person can't see the word!
- The student in the hot seat listens to their team-mates and tries to guess the word.
- The first hot seat student to say the word wins a point for their team.
- Then change the students over, with a new member of each team taking their place in their team's hot seat.
- Then write the next word…

Definitions - Get rid of it

This game can be adapted for matching definitions to words or matching opposites.You need two sets of cards. White cards for the words and another colour for the questions. Put all questions in a bag or hat at the start of the game. Give each student at least three word cards, placed in front of them on their desks. Choose one card from the hat and read the question. Students study their word cards. Whoever has the corresponding word can get rid of it.

Example questions on cards:
- What type of animal has kittens?
- What's the opposite of the verb 'to borrow'?
- What do you call a person who cuts hair?
- Where can you buy medicine?