

Exploring Effective Strategies for Vocabulary Teaching in Senior High School English

Yixin Ou

School of Foreign Languages, China West Normal University, Nanchong, China

Email: 1306479590@qq.com

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Abstract

Vocabulary constitutes the basic elements of language, and vocabulary learning occupies an important position in the process of language learning. In order to solve the shortcomings in vocabulary teaching more effectively, this paper analyses in depth the problems faced by the current high school English vocabulary teaching and puts forward a series of teaching improvement measures accordingly, aiming at enhancing students' vocabulary mastery and practical application ability.

Keywords

Vocabulary Teaching; Senior High School; English Teaching Strategies

1. Introduction

English vocabulary plays a vital role in the whole English learning, which is the basic element constituting the language, the direct embodiment of phonetics, grammar and semantics, the foundation of all language skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing, and an important cornerstone for developing students' language ability and cultivating their English disciplinary literacy. The amount and firmness of vocabulary mastered by a student directly affects his language ability and the richness and accuracy of his thought expression. On the one hand, vocabulary, as an integral part of the discourse, plays an important role in understanding and constructing the discourse; on the other hand, the discourse, as a carrier of language learning, provides a context for the perception, understanding, internalization and use of vocabulary. Therefore, vocabulary teaching is the focus and difficulty of high school English teaching. And high school English teachers need to think about and solve the two core problems of vocabulary teaching: what to teach and how to teach? Combining relevant literature and my own practical experience, the author analyses the problems of vocabulary teaching in high school English, and then proposes a series of high school English vocabulary teaching strategies.

2. The Current Situation of English Vocabulary Teaching in Senior High School

2.1 Problems of Learning

Students' common problems with vocabulary learning can be attributed to the following two areas:

2.1.1 Weak awareness of independent learning among students

In language output, students have little or no awareness of actively using the vocabulary they have learnt. In vocabulary learning, some students showed obvious dependence, they often lacked the awareness and motivation of independent learning, and overly relied on teachers' direct guidance and external supervision. The passive learning state not only weakens their motivation to actively explore new vocabulary and build their personal vocabulary network, but also limits their flexibility and creativity in vocabulary use.

2.1.2 Lack of students' vocabulary learning strategies

Students' vocabulary learning and memorization methods are mechanical and out of context. Some students rely too much on the mechanical memory of rote memorization, reading and writing words repeatedly without flexibility and in-depth understanding; they ignore the importance of context in vocabulary learning, and memorize the meanings of words in isolation, which leads to the inability to accurately understand and use these words in practical application. Meanwhile, students' vocabulary learning is not systematic, without clear plans and goals, making it difficult to build an effective vocabulary network. In addition, the lack of follow-up review leads to poor memorization and makes it difficult to master the vocabulary learnt in the long term. Therefore, it is particularly important to develop students' independent learning ability and vocabulary learning strategies.

2.2 Problems of Teaching

One of the factors affecting students' vocabulary learning is the way teachers teach vocabulary (Nation, 2004). The problems of teaching English vocabulary in high school at this stage are highlighted in the following aspects:

2.2.1 Lack of categorization of vocabulary

The Experimental Textbook of General High School Curriculum Standards-English Teachers' Book has specific requirements for vocabulary teaching in each unit in terms of listening, speaking, reading and writing, with the aim of letting teachers make clear the vocabulary teaching objectives, distinguish between primary and secondary, and carry out vocabulary teaching at different levels and in different steps and with different focuses. However, in vocabulary teaching, many teachers

are not clear about the objectives of vocabulary teaching, and they do not distinguish between primary and secondary vocabulary teaching, and they do not focus on vocabulary teaching. Only in the pre-course focused on teaching all the words in each unit, without prioritization and focus, so that students master all the words appearing in the textbook. This not only increases the burden of students' vocabulary memory, but also makes students feel that vocabulary learning is messy and difficult, and even produce resistance to the psychology of losing interest and confidence in English vocabulary learning.

2.2.2 Vocabulary presentation lacks context and the teaching mode is mechanical

In the classroom, the teacher reads the vocabulary in the order of the unit vocabulary list and explains the basic meaning of the vocabulary, derivatives and fixed collocations one by one; after the reading teaching, the teacher focuses on explaining the meaning of the individual key vocabulary. The knowledge of vocabulary is not deepened and the ability to use vocabulary comprehensively is not practised. The process of vocabulary teaching is based on the teacher's lecture, without presenting new words in context, disconnected from reading activities, and unrelated to the comprehension of the discourse. Students are in a passive learning state, which is not conducive to stimulating students' interest in learning vocabulary and developing their language skills.

2.2.3 Lack of cultural teaching of vocabulary

In traditional high school English vocabulary teaching, teachers focus on word meaning, lexical properties and collocational usage, paying attention only to the learning of vocabulary forms and ignoring the organic connection between word meanings, and lacking the cultivation of students' cultural awareness. Students memorize word spellings and superficial Chinese interpretations in an isolated and mechanical way, thus ignoring the cultural background of vocabulary and its application in specific contexts, and neglecting the differences in cultural connotations between English words and Chinese words, resulting in the inability to construct a vocabulary meaning network.

2.2.4 Rigid assessment and lack of internalization of vocabulary

At the present stage, many teachers assess vocabulary mainly by writing and dictating. If you can write the meaning of a word in dictation and spell it correctly in dictation, you have mastered the vocabulary. Even though these methods can play a role in short-term vocabulary memorization, in the long run, they cannot effectively stimulate students' intrinsic motivation and make the learning process dull and boring. More importantly, this kind of isolated teaching method ignores the intrinsic connection between vocabulary and contextual application, which limits the students' comprehensive mastery of the deeper meaning and usage of vocabulary, and

is not conducive to the enhancement of their comprehensive language use ability.

2.2.5 Vocabulary teaching ignores phonological-grammatical knowledge and segregates phonemes and meanings

Many high school English teachers ignore the systematic teaching of phonological and grammatical knowledge when teaching vocabulary. When teaching vocabulary, many teachers just lead and follow the students, not only do they not give the students guidance on phonetics and grammar, but also isolate the interconnection between vocabulary sounds and meanings. So much so that it is difficult for students to use the laws of pronunciation and grammar to help memorize words, rote memorization of the pronunciation of words is tedious, and the burden of English vocabulary learning on students has increased, and even produce anorexia or abandonment of learning.

2.2.6 Vocabulary teaching lacks guidance on learning strategies, light on memory rules, light on review and consolidation

High school English teaching not only emphasizes the cultivation of students' comprehensive language use ability, but also stresses the cultivation of students' effective English learning strategies. However, many high school English teachers still adopt the method of knowledge instillation, ignoring students' cognitive memory characteristics and learning development needs, and lacking guidance on vocabulary learning strategies. Some teachers ignore the importance of the law of memory, that is, students need more than ten meaningful encounters before they can really master a word, and neglect the review and consolidation of vocabulary in actual teaching.

3. Strategies for Teaching English Vocabulary in High School

The English Curriculum Standard for General High Schools (2017 Edition) points out that vocabulary teaching is not simply memorizing words, nor is it an independent word drill, but is a comprehensive language practice activity carried out in a specific context in combination with a specific theme. In order to better improve students' vocabulary learning and application ability, this paper puts forward the following teaching suggestions by combining relevant literature and the author's own practical experience:

3.1 Vocabulary Categorization to Build Word Networks

Teachers can classify the vocabulary according to the nature of words, frequency of use and topics, and draw a mind map to help students construct a vocabulary network. Teachers can also classify the vocabulary into reading vocabulary and writing vocabulary according to the actual needs of reading and writing, so as to effectively reduce the students' burden of memorization. At the same time, it is also possible to guide students in brainstorming and integrating relevant vocabulary based on unit

topics such as travel, art, music, agriculture, etc.

3.2 Setting the Context and Teaching for Meaning

Creating realistic situations can make vocabulary teaching more practical and interesting. Teachers should make an in-depth analysis of the content of the textbook on the basis of their understanding of the textbook, and know the theme and key vocabulary of each unit. According to the texts, dialogues and illustrations provided in the textbook, they should find suitable materials for creating situations. In the classroom communication, teachers should let students use the vocabulary learnt in this lesson for self-expression on the one hand, and encourage students to use fixed vocabulary to make sentences for communication on the other hand, so that students can deepen their understanding and mastery of the vocabulary in this lesson through repeated practice and increase their interest in learning, so as to achieve the teaching objectives. In addition, in the process of memorizing vocabulary, many students are easily confused with similar words or near-synonyms, so teachers can create micro-contexts to help students distinguish and use the confusing words effectively and accurately.

3.3 Use Word Blocks and Focus on Collocations

Word Block Teaching Method is a vocabulary teaching method that takes fixed collocations, idioms or semi-fixed expressions as the basic form, takes context as the main clue, and takes language activities as the main carrier, which can strengthen students' English learning effect. Teachers can apply the word block teaching method in vocabulary teaching, so that students can explore the word formation rules of English vocabulary and clarify the application skills in the process of completing the tasks of discourse reading, special training, written writing, etc., so as to memorize the vocabulary solidly and apply it flexibly in the learning practice. Teachers can use context as a carrier, through creating problematic situations, story situations or life situations, etc., to integrate word blocks into the context, so that students can firmly memorize vocabulary knowledge. Use writing as a framework to promote students' language expression. Teachers can guide students to actively use word blocks in the process of writing, so that they can use fixed phrases, semi-fixed phrases, etc., to develop fluent language expression.

3.4 Emphasis on Phonics, Phonological Links

Strengthen the foundation of phonetics, so that vocabulary teaching is a combination of phonetics, morphology, meaning and usage. English is a phonetic script, each word has its own pronunciation and follows certain spelling rules, mastering basic knowledge of phonetics is the foundation of vocabulary and even of this subject." The amount of phonological knowledge will directly affect students' vocabulary learning and language development. High school students have a certain phonologi-

cal foundation, teachers should strengthen the teaching of phonological knowledge to help students consolidate the mastery of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), the rules of pronunciation, syllable division, stress marking and other basic knowledge of phonetics. Vocabulary teaching is interspersed with pronunciation rules, spelling rules and phonetics-related knowledge, teaching students to categorise vocabulary according to pronunciation rules, and gradually building a word system network. This will help to improve students' overall phonological level and reduce their vocabulary learning burden.

3.5 Focusing on the Cultivation of Independent Learning Ability and Strengthening the Guidance of Learning Strategies

Teachers should inspire students to analyse, discover, explore and summarize language knowledge, and to form self-learning habits and learning strategies suitable for themselves. Teachers can use vocabulary teaching strategies such as phonological network, structural network, semantic network and chunks of vocabulary to guide students to learn vocabulary on their own initiative, so as to cultivate students' independent learning ability and innovative thinking, and to improve the efficiency of vocabulary learning. Teachers can use vocabulary teaching strategies such as phonological network, structural network, semantic network and chunk network to guide students to learn vocabulary actively, so as to cultivate students' independent learning ability and innovative thinking, and to improve the efficiency of vocabulary learning. In addition, teachers should take both inside and outside the classroom, combining explicit and implicit, penetrating the guidance of vocabulary learning strategies. According to the characteristics of students' learning memory and forgetting rules, teachers should guide students to review, consolidate, summarize, test and evaluate the vocabulary they have learnt in a timely manner outside the classroom to prevent forgetting.

3.6 Apply Multiple Resources for Vocabulary Learning

Adoption of electronic dictionaries, mind maps and other tools to assist vocabulary learning. The Curriculum Standard puts forward the development goal that students should be guided to "use dictionaries and other tools effectively", and the electronic dictionary, as a high-tech e-learning tool, has become one of the most commonly used tools for students' English learning because of its convenience, portability and speed (Chen Fang et al., 2010). And the application of mind maps as an effective graphical thinking tool to express divergent thinking, which has the characteristics of intuition and fun, is conducive to deepening comprehension, strengthening the memory function, and promoting the development of innovative thinking, which in turn optimises the learning process and efficiency, and plays a vital role in attracting the attention of senior high school students and improving the efficiency of vocabulary teaching. Teachers can carry out English vocabulary pre-study based on the

mind map, guiding students to adopt the efficient tool of the mind map to systematically pre-study and review the vocabulary of each unit, and to meticulously sort out the vocabulary network of different lexemes.

3.7 Vocabulary Can Be Taught in a Flexible Way

3.7.1 Game-based approach to teaching and learning

Introducing games into the classroom diversifies the form of teaching and is conducive to cultivating students' interest in learning English and improving learning efficiency and teaching effectiveness. Game teaching of vocabulary can effectively prevent students from learning fatigue or producing boredom, is conducive to creating a harmonious classroom atmosphere, so that students in a relaxed and happy atmosphere to understand and master the vocabulary. There are many vocabulary teaching games, the common ones are as follows: riddle, connect the dots, competition.

3.7.2 Associative pedagogy

Association refers to the recall of another language material by seeing or hearing it and comparing them to find out what is the same, similar or opposite between them; or to summarize or summarize the relevant contents in a general or detailed chain, so as to establish some kind of connection between them. The association can be deepened step by step, firstly from the phonological and morphological association of words, then to the structural collocation between words, and finally to the semantic and cultural association. There are two main forms of association teaching method: correlation association and comparison association.

3.7.3 Direct method of teaching

Intuitive teaching is the direct use of objective things represented by vocabulary words in vocabulary teaching, so that vocabulary words can establish a direct connection with objective things and promote students' understanding of their meanings. Visual teaching methods can usually take the form of teaching with objects and illustrations.

3.7.4 Word-formation

Since many English vocabulary words are composed of roots plus affixes, memorizing them after analyzing the word structure will enhance the effect of vocabulary memorization. Teachers should strengthen students' learning of English word formation, focus on analyzing and summarizing the three basic English word formation methods of synthesis, conversion and derivation required in the examination syllabus, and let students understand the spelling method, the inverse method, the abbreviation method, etc., so as to improve the efficiency of vocabulary memorization and the ability to understand and apply the vocabulary.

3.7.5 Application of an Emerging Model of Vocabulary Instruction

"Planned vocabulary instruction" (PLI), as an emerging model of vocabulary instruction, has the core requirement that teachers need to schedule, design and prepare for vocabulary instruction, infuse vocabulary instruction with a planned element, and enhance learners' intentional attention to vocabulary during vocabulary instruction to promote the development of effective vocabulary knowledge and competence. Ruo-Yu Huang (2008a, 2008b) constructed the structure of PLI, suggesting that teachers should analyse students' vocabulary needs, integrate vocabulary learning into special skills training in listening, speaking, reading and writing, and provide students with rich opportunities for vocabulary focus and extended rehearsal. In terms of vocabulary input, storage and extraction, it is proposed to use "prefabricated chunks" as a unit, use vocabulary learning strategies and metacognitive strategies to establish vocabulary links and associations, and organize a vocabulary knowledge network.

4. Conclusion

Vocabulary learning is a complex and gradual systematic project, which emphasizes the importance of accumulation, focuses on repeated practice, and advocates understanding and using vocabulary in context. In view of this, high school English teachers should continue to analyse the difficulties and challenges in vocabulary teaching, refine effective teaching strategies, and actively apply these strategies in teaching practice, so as to improve students' vocabulary learning efficiency and enhance their language literacy.

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