

On presenting vocabulary

The English language comprises hundreds of thousands of words. Learning the vocabulary can somehow frighten a learner and stop him/her from doing it. But our students do not need to produce every word which is learnt. They just need to recognize some words. The teacher must select what to teach correlating frequency and usefulness of the vocabulary to the students' particular needs as in the case with English for Specific Purposes. Once the teacher has chosen what to teach, the next important steps are to consider what students need to know about the items, and how the teacher can teach them. The student may need to know the following about an item: a) what a word means (it is checked with questions); b) how it is pronounced (the use of a phonemic script is very important here and the drills to practice the pronunciation and the word stresses); c) its form (to use a verb, a noun or an adjective etc effectively); d) how a word is spelt (it is particularly problematic for learners of English because there is often no clear relation between how a word is written and how it is pronounced); e) grammatical patterns (e. g. a particular preposition after a verb, countable or uncountable noun, f) the relation of the word to other words (lexical sets, synonyms, antonyms); g) the way the words occur together (to prevent mistakes in usage – 'Yours sincerely' or 'With love' in letters); h) the meaning of prefixes and suffixes which is extremely useful to know for a better understanding of English. Which of these areas to choose for highlighting depends on the students' level and an item you are teaching. To succeed in getting across the meaning of a lexical item the teacher can choose one of the following ways of presenting vocabulary: a) illustration which is very useful for more concrete words; b) definition that is checked with questions; c) translation, though it is not always possible, and d) context which must be clear to a student or it is possible to give sample sentences to clarify further meaning. Often a combination of techniques can be both helpful and memorable. Alternative ways of teaching vocabulary are also available.