

## PRESENTING NEW VOCABULARY

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Teaching new vocabulary is one of the key skills of future language teachers that should be paid special attention to within the course Methods of Foreign Language Teaching in higher educational institutions. Presenting lexical items is the first essential step on the way to their memorization and active use, and should be facilitated by language teachers in an effective and creative way. The article deals with the method of presenting new vocabulary to learners of English, showcases how it can be instructed during practical classes, discusses potential problems that students might face developing the new teaching skill and suggests the ways of handling these issues.

**Key words:** foreign languages, lexical item, methods of teaching, vocabulary presentation.

**Лісна М.І. Презентація нової лексики.** Навчання учнів новому вокабуляру є однією з основних навичок майбутніх учителів, розвитку якої варто приділити особливу увагу під час курсу «Методика викладання іноземної мови» у вищих навчальних закладах. Презентація лексичних одиниць є першим важливим кроком на шляху до їх запам'ятовування та активного використання, а отже вчитель мови має проводити її ефективно і креативно. У статті розглядається метод презентації нової лексики на уроках англійської мови, представлено спосіб навчання цьому методу під час практичних занять, обговорюються потенційні проблеми, з якими можуть стикнутися студенти під час засвоєння нового уміння, а також шляхи подолання цих труднощів.

**Ключові слова:** іноземні мови, лексична одиниця, методика викладання, презентація вокабуляру.

**Лесная М.И. Презентация новой лексики.** Обучение учащихся новому вокабуляру является одним из основных навыков будущих учителей, развитию которого стоит уделить особое внимание во время изложения курса «Методика преподавания иностранного языка» в высших учебных заведениях. Презентация лексических единиц является первым важным шагом на пути к их запоминанию и активному использованию, следовательно, учитель языка должен проводить ее эффективно и креативно. В статье рассматривается метод презентации новой лексики на уроках английского языка, представлен способ обучения этому методу во время практических занятий, обсуждаются потенциальные проблемы, с которыми могут столкнуться студенты во время освоения нового навыка, а также пути преодоления этих трудностей.

**Ключевые слова:** иностранные языки, лексическая единица, методика преподавания, презентация вокабуляра.

It goes without saying that vocabulary is a core to foreign language proficiency. As D. A. Wilkins insightfully remarked, “without grammar very little can be conveyed; without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed” [7, p. 111]. Therefore one of the major objectives of any learner is to know as many words and expressions as possible in order to develop their fluency, and that is why “learners carry around dictionaries and not grammar books” [4, p. 4].

While acquiring a new lexical item learners might face a wide array of problems related to the sophistication and diversity of the language system. S. Thornbury outlines the following issues:

- pronunciation (e.g. *choir, wrist, onion*);
- spelling (e.g. *thorough, taught, scissors*);
- complexity (e.g. *serendipity, misdemeanor, surveillance*);

- grammar associated with the word (especially if it is different from the one in the mother tongue, e.g. *money vs. гроші; advice vs. порада*);
- meaning (when meanings of some words overlap, e.g. *sulky vs. grumpy; biased vs. prejudiced*) [6, p. 27–28].

On the one hand, it is students' task to memorize new lexical items, focus on deliberate learning, and take responsibility for their vocabulary learning [3]. But on the other hand, in the language classrooms the complicated process of learning new vocabulary should be facilitated and simplified by a foreign language teacher. In order to be able to do this in an efficient and engaging way future teachers need to be equipped with techniques to present vocabulary, and trained to handle the problems which learners might face while mastering new words and expressions.

The object of this article is the methodology of teaching foreign languages in higher educational institutions, while its subject is the development of students' skills of teaching vocabulary. The main objective of the article is to outline a strategy of teaching students studying the methodology of teaching foreign languages to present new vocabulary to learners, whereas its specific tasks are as follows: to present the workflow for teaching a new vocabulary item, to discuss the difficulties that students might face while acquiring a new skill, as well as the ways to handle these problems. The importance of effective vocabulary teaching and acquisition determines the topicality of this paper.

Before presenting the strategy of vocabulary presentation, let us define what it actually means to know a lexical item. A number of researchers agree that it is the case when a learner can do the following: understand a word or expression in the context, recall it when needed, pronounce and spell it accurately, detect the meaning of its parts, use it with the accurate meaning and in the adequate situation, use it in a grammatically correct way, adequately use other words with it, replace it with other relevant words. These features can be summarized into several key aspects of a word, i.e. form, use and meaning. As I.S.P. Nation argued, pronunciation, spelling, and morphological parts of a word can be included in the form of a word. What the word stands for, as well as the associations that a certain lexical unit triggers are denoted by the meaning. Use involves the grammatical functions of the word or phrase, collocations that usually go with it, and finally any restrictions on its use, in terms of frequency, level, and so forth [2, p. 27].

In order to raise students' awareness of the three key aspects of a word students might be asked to do the following exercise:

Task 1. Read the dictionary article of the word *surveillance* [9]. Which information in it refers to the meaning, form, use of the word?

**surveillance** /sə:'veɪləns, AmE sə'r-/ noun [uncountable] 1) when the police, army, etc watch a person or place carefully because they may be connected with criminal activities • *They were under constant close surveillance day and night. Electronic surveillance equipment;* 2) when one country watches the military activities of another country to see what

they are planning to do • *A surveillance mission; surveillance aircraft;* 3) when doctors, health departments, etc watch an ill person or watch the development of a disease in a population • *Diane was placed under psychiatric surveillance.*

The three aspects of a word – form, use and meaning – should be offered in teaching vocabulary. Researchers point out various techniques for dealing with use, meaning and form of a word. These can be summed up into the several stages of vocabulary presentation, the objective of which is to ensure that students identify, understand, say and use new words correctly.

1. Introduce the topic area. Before dealing with a word meaning a teacher should set the context, activate students' schema, and assess learners' knowledge of the topic vocabulary. Such an approach lets students be more concentrated and interested, and ensures better retention of the new information.

2. Convey the meaning of a new word. The ways of rendering the meaning of a new word can be visual (pictures, photos, drawings, visual aids, realia, etc.), verbal (definitions, explanations, opposites, synonyms, short stories, translation, etc.), kinesthetic (miming, using gestures, etc.), graphical (scales, graphs, diagrams, etc.).

3. Elicit / provide a new word. When introducing new vocabulary, it is preferable to stick to the strategy of eliciting words and expressions, rather than providing them. Within one group, students have different exposure to language, therefore individual learners might be able to provide the word, as well as its simple definition. Elicitation is an effective tool to engage students and make the process of presenting the vocabulary more student-centred by maximizing speaking opportunities and keeping learners alert and attentive [6, p. 87].

4. Check students' understanding of the word's meaning. In order to check students' understanding of the presented words a teacher can ask short and simple questions which touch upon the key elements of the word meaning (e.g. *Is cosy something comfortable? Is it something warm? Is it something small?*). The questions may also involve students' personal experience (e.g. *What ski resorts have you been to?*). Besides, students can be asked to give the opposites to the word, explain it using their own word, etc.

5. Model pronunciation and write the word on the board. The rationale of modelling a word before providing its written form is that this is the natural way of vocabulary learning and oral mode of perception precedes the written one in mother tongue acquisition. Besides, it prevents students from making mistakes in speech, since the pronunciation and spelling of English words mostly do not match.

6. Highlight phonological and grammatical features of the word. Dealing with phonology can include specifying information about stress, number of syllables, some sounds difficult to pronounce, etc.

7. Highlight grammatical and derivational features of the word. Analysing grammatical features of the word could consist in mentioning its part of speech, irregular grammar forms, prepositions used with it, etc. Highlighting derivatives of the word might be especially enlightening if the word forms can be confusing for learners (e.g. *to suspect – a suspect, exhausted – exhaustion*) or the word families of the two languages in question are asymmetrical and some item is missing, (e.g. *занепокоєний – занепокоєння – непокоїти* vs. *anxious – anxiety – ?*)

8. Drill the new word. Choral and individual repetition enables learners to get used to the phonological features of the word and memorize it.

After this method is introduced, the tutor should showcase how it can be applied in actual practice. Below is the example of presenting the word *masterpiece*:

Teacher: *Have you ever seen the Mona Lisa painting?*

Student 1: *Yes, I have.*

Student 2: *Me too.*

Teacher: *What is it famous for?*

Students: *It's beautiful. Everybody has seen it. Leonardo da Vinci painted it.*

Teacher: *If a genius artist creates a wonderful painting, it can be called a ...*

Student 1: *...art?*

Student 2: *...masterpiece?*

Teacher: *Right you are! Masterpiece. What other masterpieces do you know?*

Student 1: *Sunflowers by Van Gogh.*

Teacher: *Good job! So, if a kid draws something in their album, can this be called a masterpiece?*

Students: *No!*

Teacher: *Please explain the word "masterpiece" using your own words.*

Student 1: *It's a famous painting created by a genius artist.*

Teacher models the pronunciation of *masterpiece*, writes this word on the board and asks students: *How many syllables are there in this word?*

Students: *Three.*

Teacher: *Which one is stressed?*

Students: *The first one.*

Teacher: *Good! Please, note that in the first syllable we've got a long sound [Ĕ]:]. And now please repeat this word after me: masterpiece.*

Students: *Masterpiece.*

In order to provide students with more practice of the featured approach, they might be asked to do the following exercise:

Task 2. Match the different stages of presentation of the word *restriction* with their functions and identify their logical order:

	Stage of presentation	Function	Ordinal number
a)	Let's imagine you drive a car. Why can't you drive it at 120 km/h in town? Because there's ...	Providing the context, eliciting the word	
b)	How do we pronounce the last syllable?	Negative checking	
c)	Let's imagine, you want to move to the USA. Can you do it right now? Why not? Is the number of immigrants limited? This means, they have a ...	Definition	
d)	Please, repeat this word after me	Checking understanding	
e)	Is <i>restriction</i> a rule or system that allows you to do anything you want?	Highlighting pronunciation	
f)	Try to explain <i>restriction</i> in your own words	Highlighting derivatives	
g)	If <i>restriction</i> is a noun, what is the verb?	Drilling	

While teaching vocabulary, explaining meaning in a simple and yet adequate way might seem quite challenging for students. According to J. Harmer, the trick of explaining meaning effectively is to choose the best method to fit the meaning that needs to be explained [1, p. 205]. It should be noted that using students' mother tongue seems to be the most direct and least demanding means of conveying its meaning. It has been used by generations of teachers who applied Grammar and Translation Method in their pedagogical practice. The opponents of this method claim that learners should hear new words in their natural surroundings, similar to children hearing explanations in their mother tongue while mastering it. It is also argued that "over-reliance on translation may

mean that learners fail to develop an independent L2 lexicon, with the effect that they always access L2 words by means of their LI equivalents, rather than directly" [6, p. 77]. However, in each particular case a teacher, it may be left for discretion. If despite all the explanations in target language, the meaning of the word still remains obscure to students, then it should just be provided in students' mother tongue. In order to give students practice of different ways of rendering meaning of vocabulary, they might be given the following task:

Task 3. Work with your partner and think of the most appropriate ways to convey the meaning of the words below. Script the explanation you would give to your students.

	Word	Ways of conveying the meaning	Comments
1)	Trampoline (n)		
2)	Tiptoe (v)		
3)	Anxious (adj)		
4)	Obese (adj)		
5)	Chimney (n)		
6)	Privacy (n)		
7)	Pet (n)		
8)	Increase (v)		
9)	Put up with ( v.)		
10)	Hardly ever (adv)		

Various techniques of presenting vocabulary have their pros and cons, so teachers should be sensible and creative while applying them. The following task is aimed at preparing students for the critical evaluation

of the techniques they are going to apply in practice:

Task 4. Work with your partner and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the following techniques used while presenting new vocabulary:

	Technique	Advantages	Disadvantages
1)	Be spontaneous while presenting new words.		
2)	Don't use monolingual dictionaries because definitions there are too complicated.		
3)	After you explain the meaning of the word, ask your students: 'Do you understand?'		
4)	If you teach students different meanings of the word, they will memorize it better.		
5)	While teaching food vocabulary, bring to class different kinds of food to make the presentation more enjoyable.		
6)	Never use learners' mother tongue.		
7)	If learners can't guess the word, just give them some more information about its meaning.		
8)	Drill all the words, even the ones that seem simple.		

Then the tutor has to provide students with several lexical items which should be presented. Given this task, students often reveal lack of confidence and mostly refuse to do it in front of the whole class. In this case the tutor should ask students to work in pairs, plan presentation of lexical items and practise it in small groups.

Initially while preparing vocabulary presentations students tend to overestimate their language proficiency and use their own ideas of words' pronunciation and meaning, which results in lots of inaccuracies. Although in the real language classrooms teachers will inevitably have to teach some vocabulary items 'as they go' and give explanations playing by the ear, in the first instance a systemic approach to teaching vocabulary should be mastered.

As J. Scrivener argued, "random explanations off the top of your head in the middle of a lesson may solve unexpected problems on the spot, but lexical items dealt with in this way are unlikely to become a long-term part of the learner's own store of English" [5, p. 229]. Therefore students should be warned against relying on their intuition only and encouraged to look up every word they are going to teach in monolingual dictionaries. Apart from definitions, English-English dictionaries feature information on pronunciation, typical usage, relationship with other words and expressions, and that is why enable users to focus on the most essential aspects of lexical items. However, not all monolingual dictionaries are equally appropriate for teaching purposes. For instance, compare the following dictionary definitions:

Word	Definition 1	Definition 2
Court (n)	An official assembly for the transaction of judicial business [10].	A place where legal matters are considered by a judge and jury or by a magistrate [8].
Marsupial (n)	A mammal of an order whose members are born incompletely developed and are typically carried and suckled in a pouch on the mother's belly. Marsupials are found chiefly in Australia and New Guinea, and also in America [11].	An animal such as a kangaroo which carries its babies in a pocket of skin on its body [9].

Apparently, the definitions in the first column would seem obscure to learners, since they are complicated and contain some challenging words, for example, *assembly, judicial, sulked, pouch*. Since it is essential for teachers to keep vocabulary explanation simple in order not to confuse and frustrate learners, it is advisable to use Collins Dictionary [8] or Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English Online [9], which feature simple and user-friendly definitions.

At early stages it makes sense to follow all the outlined above steps of presenting vocabulary in order to get enough practice and confidence. Later on after students have come to grips with the approach, it can be pointed out that a teacher should be flexible presenting the new vocabulary, include the most salient features of a word in its presentation, choose the relevant stages and take into account the mistakes that learners most often make using it. Students should also be warned that although elicitation enables to make vocabulary presentation more student-centred, it should

not be overused. If learners struggle to answer teacher's questions, they might be frustrated and the whole presentation might turn into a tedious and demotivating interrogation.

In conclusion, it is worth mentioning that the strategy of presenting vocabulary outlined in this article facilitates correct perception of a word, which is the first stage on the way to its memorization and active use. According to J. Scrivener, "coming to really learn the scope and limits of a lexical item is a long and gradual process" [5, p. 236]. Therefore the further research might include exploring the ways of ensuring retention of the learnt vocabulary.

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