

USING STRIPS WITH LEXICAL ITEMS TO PROMOTE FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHER-TRAINEES' VOCABULARY LEARNING

The article deals with some theoretical and practical aspects of explicit vocabulary teaching. Special attention is paid to the principles of explicit vocabulary instruction and to the technology of using strips with lexical items. Particularly their advantages are pointed out, an illustrative sampling of activities is introduced and a set of teacher guidelines in planning explicit vocabulary teaching is presented.

Key words: *explicit vocabulary learning, principles, strips with lexical items, activities with the strips, advantages and benefits, guidelines.*

The analysis of the modern authentic courses accessible in Ukraine and of the school textbooks published by Ukrainian authors shows that there is an obvious tendency to provide most vocabulary growth through incidental learning, that is, through reading, listening, discussions, and so forth. Reading has been singled out as the primary means, and the most reliable way to promote incidental vocabulary learning. This has been undoubtedly the implication of the communicative method which requires meaningful contexts for presenting and practicing new vocabulary, as well as performing [2, p. 123-138].

We fully recognize the importance of incidental learning, however, we support numerous researchers who claim that vocabulary learning can and should be enhanced through direct teaching. It is well documented that direct instruction promotes vocabulary development. And even if students have a lot of reading materials at their fingertips, they can benefit from explicit vocabulary instruction.

Traditionally direct vocabulary teaching includes the explicit teaching of word meanings, discussions of word building, word family activities, semantic mapping, synonym and antonym activities, and word associations. However, there is a wide range of activities on the sentence level, consequently leading to contextual way of learning vocabulary.

In this article, we consider the principles of explicit vocabulary teaching. We describe the benefits of using strips with lexical items in class and then describe the explicit instructional activities to meet the needs of the English language teacher-trainees. We conclude with a set of teacher guidelines in planning explicit vocabulary teaching.

Researchers outline three **principles** which can guide teachers in planning explicit vocabulary instruction. First, "teachers should consider the ways in which they systematically recycle important vocabulary in the classroom, meaning that vocabulary learning requires multiple exposures to new lexical items in various discourse contexts". This implies that the quantity of exposures as well as the contexts matter. Second, the researchers claim that "elaborated vocabulary learning occurs when students make meaningful connections between new and already familiar words. (...) This allows for faster processing of semantically related words". Third, recognizing the powerful influence of context on students' vocabulary growth, the researchers find it necessary "to focus instructional attention on the words that students have encountered in rich contexts (usually through reading) rather than from decontextualized word lists" [1, p. 3-4].

Basically recognizing the mentioned principles, we think it urgent to focus on the particularities of the new vocabulary and on the learning context which require other considerations. To start with, the argument for decontextualized lists is that some groups of vocabulary can basically be presented in lists and consequently practiced on the level of the lexical item only. For example, it refers to the words that name animals, flowers, furniture, clothes, feelings and emotions, qualities of character, etc. Moreover, we find it more effective to firstly establish direct relation between the equivalents in English and Ukrainian. If the word is of a different nature and itself does not give a clear idea of its meaning (e.g. to point), it should be presented in set phrases and collocations with a clear meaning (e.g. to point to a building, to point out one's weaknesses) which ensures practicing them in lists anyway. However, there are vocabulary activities which require only the basic word.

Furthermore, the amount and the technology of explicit vocabulary teaching depend upon the category of the learner. We assert that for a number of reasons language teacher-trainees can and should be exposed to more explicit vocabulary learning than school pupils. On the one hand, being advanced learners they have to operate an enormous list of words, and explicit vocabulary activities enable quick and systematic revision of it to prevent forgetting the vocabulary and to maintain the relations between them. Also, a variety of cognitive skills the trainees already possess at this level makes it possible to design a wide range of explicit activities.

The strips with lexical items activities, expanded upon in the remainder of this article, easily accommodate the principles of vocabulary learning that were just considered. As will become evident, the strips with lexical items provide opportunities of multiple exposures to lexical items; they encourage students to make connections between new and known words; they can be used in response to meaningful contexts or to build relevant context around new words. Evidently important, the activities promote active students' involvement as this is effective with high-achieving as well as reluctant language students. Moreover, they can provide professional skills development.

Strips with lexical items are paper (or carton) slips the size of which should be convenient to take hold of; the letters must be big enough for quick perception. The number of strips in a set for one lesson should be equal to

or outnumber the quantity of students in the language group. Strips can be handed out to the students as they stay at their desks or the students can encircle the desk with the strips. The teacher can decide which vocabulary item a particular student should get and distribute them deliberately. As well as that, the teacher can allow the student to take a strip with the word he chooses or to take any strip without seeing the word on it.

The way the lexical item is presented on the strip depends on the instruction. If the student is expected to give the word's equivalent in the native language, to explain its meaning in English and to give its synonym or antonym, the lexical item has to be identifiable (e.g. to draw a picture, to draw conclusions, to draw the audience). Having the word to draw alone the students can be asked to think of set phrases or collocations with it.

Teachers can devise a number of **explicit activities** with regard to curricular priorities and students' needs.

Here we describe a small sampling of strips with lexical items activities that can promote vocabulary learning and support language skills development. Some require very little class time whereas others become part of more substantial lessons. Many traditional vocabulary-building activities [3, 4, 5] can be adapted and used with the strips. The strips with lexical items can be used for explicit vocabulary building in numerous ways. The further illustrative vocabulary activities revolve around the unit on Feelings and Emotions.

Meaning awareness activities. Students may be asked to take a strip with a feeling word, read the item out loud and give its equivalent in the native language.

Students may be asked to identify the meaning of the item, give its equivalent in the native language and request the English equivalent from the group mates.

One student acts as a teacher, reads the lexical items out loud and gets their equivalents from the group mates.

Students describe the meaning of the feeling word in English without pronouncing the words on their strips and let the class guess them.

When vocabulary permits, each student pantomimes the lexical item (e.g. adjectives to describe feelings and emotions) and lets the class identify the emotion or feeling.

Each student describes the situation in which he / she experienced a particular feeling or emotion (the lexical item is on the strip). The student describes how he / she behaved or how the emotion / feeling manifested itself. The class guesses the lexical item.

Grouping. The student takes a strip with the lexical item and refers it either to negative or positive emotions / feelings.

Finding synonyms / antonyms. The teacher generates a set of lexical items which are synonyms / antonyms to those on the strips. The teacher pronounces a word and the student who has the synonym / antonym reads it out loud.

Each student reads the item on the strip and gives its synonym or antonym.

Word part exercises. The student gives the corresponding adjective to the noun on the strip or does the reverse.

Now the vocabulary items can be integrated into speaking activities to promote growth through meaningful use and recycling.

Conversations. Students work in pairs or in small groups. They get strips with a number of feeling words. They describe their typical causes of the feelings / emotions and their reactions to the emotional states. As a variation, students can imagine the conditions under which they would experience the feeling.

Other activities are possible if students are learning common phrases, phrasal verbs, fixed expressions, idioms.

Associations. Students read the lexical items and generate ideas, facts or opinions that occur and which must be associated with their background, life experience and attitudes. The class must respond in a natural way.

Surveys. Each student generates a question with the lexical item on the strip. Students interview each other and afterward report the results.

During our attempts at integrating the activities into the classroom, we realized some major advantages and benefits of using the strips with lexical items.

The first advantage is that it is easy to vary the sets of the vocabulary. For example, the basic set of feeling words can be divided into two sets of negative and positive feeling words, or into two sets of high-frequency and low-frequency words. Consequently, it is easy to design activities on the spur of the moment.

The second advantage is that the teacher provides an equal number of exposures to each item and equal involvement of the students. Also, distribution of the strips at random looks fair to the students. Moreover, an activity with the strips helps to keep students profitably busy when the teacher unexpectedly has extra time on her hands. It can also be a light filler to provide relief after a period of intense effort and concentration.

We encountered some noteworthy problems which we list further and follow that with the guidelines that can facilitate a better integration of the strips with lexical items into teaching vocabulary process.

1. Too many words were practiced in one class. There was not enough time to recycle all the items. Or if they were, it took a lot of time and reduced the lesson dynamics.

2. When we selected lexical items from the texts read by the students, we did not draw their attention to the fact that some words were uncommon or infrequently used or bookish. So, students happened to use them in conversations in colloquial speaking.

In response to these problems, we offer eight *suggestions* to help teachers use the strips more effectively and with ease.

1. The selection of lexical items and the activities with them must meet the criterion of usage. If the lexical items are infrequently used or archaic, the activities must be aimed at their understanding only. If the entries are useful for the students and often used by native speakers, instructional activities must be aimed at both understanding and

productive usage. To focus the students' attention on this criterion the teacher can use different colours for the words: red – for the useful, usable, frequently used; blue – for infrequently used or archaic.

2. The activities must insure connections between new and old entries.

3. Teachers should consider how many words they want in a set of the strips at any given time and over the unit.

4. Teachers may choose to rotate the words over the course of the term as it may be caused by the students' exposure to new texts.

5. The activities with strips are more effective if they are a predictable and regular part of the classroom activities. But the teacher must not overdo with them.

6. Teachers should use a variety of the activities which provide students with an intellectual challenge to which they would respond.

7. The fact that the explicit activity revolves around simple strips means that it is necessary to devote some thought to its introduction and ending, in particular, to link each activity with what has gone or what is coming after, in topic, mood or language. Otherwise it can cause a feeling of abruptness and restlessness. The reason for the activity may be made explicit.

8. Teachers should use a variety of layout and strips distribution techniques to ensure active students involvement and recycling of vocabulary.

To conclude, teaching vocabulary is of great importance. Incidental learning through reading should be integrated with explicit vocabulary learning. Using the strips with lexical items not only teaches word meaning but also provides opportunities for regular recycling of lexical items, connections between new and familiar lexical items, and so forth. In every case, the strips with lexical items activities can assist students in building their vocabulary and vocabulary-learning strategies.

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ВИКОРИСТАННЯ СЛОВНИКОВИХ КАРТОК У НАВЧАННІ ЛЕКСИКИ МАЙБУТНІХ УЧИТЕЛІВ ІНОЗЕМНИХ МОВ

У статті розглядаються деякі теоретичні та практичні аспекти експліцитного підходу до навчання лексики. Аналізуються принципи експліцитного підходу та описується технологія використання словникових карток у навчанні лексики майбутніх учителів іноземних мов. Зокрема, визначено переваги цього засобу навчання, надано приклади завдань і рекомендації вчителям щодо організації експліцитного навчання лексики за допомогою карток.

Ключові слова: експліцитний підхід до навчання лексики, принципи, словникові картки, переваги, завдання, рекомендації

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ИСПОЛЬЗОВАНИЕ СЛОВАРНЫХ КАРТОЧЕК ПРИ ОБУЧЕНИИ ЛЕКСИКЕ БУДУЩИХ УЧИТЕЛЕЙ ИНОСТРАННЫХ ЯЗЫКОВ

В статье рассматриваются некоторые теоретические и практические аспекты эксплицитного подхода к обучению лексике. Анализируются принципы эксплицитного подхода, и описывается технология использования словарных карточек при обучении лексике. В частности, определены преимущества этого средства обучения, приведены примеры заданий со словарными карточками, а также даны рекомендации преподавателям относительно организации эксплицитного обучения лексике с помощью словарных карточек.

Ключевые слова: эксплицитный подход к обучению лексике, принципы, словарные карточки, преимущества, задания, рекомендации.

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