

Learning style and English vocabulary teaching in Secondary School

Анотація. В даній статті розглядається використання найбільш сучасних методів навчання англійської лексики в середній школі. Показано, як вчитель має використовувати додаткові засоби навчання для досягнення найкращого результату. Ключовими концепціями статті є стилі навчання і додаткові засоби.

Перша частина статті аргументує важливість збагачення словникового запасу учнів. Вказана частина пояснює як використовувати додаткові засоби і дає визначення додаткових засобів, що використовуються для навчання лексики.

Друга частина зосереджена на різних стилях навчання і способах, якими учні отримують надану інформацію (візуальний, аудіальний, кінестетичний). Наведено приклад поєднання навчальних стилів для навчання учнів в школі. Показана ефективність подібного поєднання.

В останній частині зроблені висновки і надані поради вчителям про найкращі практики в навчанні лексики.

Ключові слова: додаткові засоби, навчальний стиль, поєднання навчальних стилів.

Abstract. The article deals with the usage of the most up-to-date methods in English vocabulary teaching. It demonstrates how a teacher should use additional means of teaching in order to achieve the best result. The clue concepts the article dwells upon are learning styles and auxiliary aids.

The first part of the article explains the importance of vocabulary enrichment for the students. The mentioned part explains how to use auxiliary aids and provides the definition of auxiliary aids used in vocabulary teaching.

The second part concentrates on different learning styles and ways the students consume given information (visual, auditory and kinaesthetic). It provides an example of how learning styles are combined when teaching children at school. The efficiency of such combination demonstrated.

The last part provides conclusions and tips for teachers about the best practices in vocabulary teaching.

Key words: auxiliary aids, learning style, learning style combination.

Introduction

Throughout all the history of English its vocabulary has been expanding constantly making nowadays the hugest one among human languages. Even nowadays approximately 800 neologisms are added to the English language annually. The structure of the language, namely comparatively simple structure of grammar system, demonstrates the importance of vocabulary in English communication comparing to other languages with more complicated grammar. Also

social, economic and technological development of human civilization has invoked a rapid growth of vocabulary. Hundreds of neologisms are widely used every day in order to denominate the concepts not existed even hundred years ago. The active vocabulary of an average speaker is increasing rapidly making it necessary to include more expressions into curricula. At the same time cross-cultural communication demands additional knowledge of expressions specific in certain culture and used by a person belonging to this culture and speaking English as foreign language.

Learning styles is a term generally used to describe an individual's natural or habitual pattern of acquiring and processing information in learning situations. Simply speaking, a learning style describes the way people receive and memorise information when studying [4]. The term "auxiliary aids" is introduced within this article in order to denote the whole scope of additional means used in vocabulary teaching. They include visual, audial and kinaesthetic aids applied in integrity with one and the same purpose and within the teaching process. Dominating learning styles of students are closely bound with auxiliary aids and regulate the ratio of visual, audial and kinaesthetic aids within integrated complex of aids.

This is why I believe vocabulary teaching being the most important part of modern English teaching at all. The amount of expressions used in everyday life and in special fields of human activity is increasing and English speaker's vocabulary must fulfil growing needs. This article proves the necessity of radically new approach in vocabulary teaching and demonstrates several examples of practical application thereof.

Brief literature review and recent research analysis

The topic of my article was reviewed before in researches conducted by Anthony Grasha [3, 123-124], Rita and Kenneth Dunn [2] and Nathan Streng [6].

Research goal

The research goal of the article is to find out how to combine learning styles for the most effective English vocabulary teaching.

Three main ways people learn

In order to teach effectively a teacher must take into consideration certain peculiarities of human perception and learning style. Every human is inherently different and thus requires individual approach in teaching for achieving satisfying results. In order to provide student with individual approach the teacher must understand the difference between psychological peculiarities of learning and learning styles. Possibly the most common and widely-used [5]

categorization of the various types of learning styles is Fleming's VARK model (sometimes VAK) which expanded upon earlier neuro-linguistic programming (VARK) models:

- visual learners;
- auditory learners;
- kinaesthetic learners or tactile learners.

Fleming claimed that visual learners have a preference for seeing (think in pictures; visual aids such as overhead slides, diagrams, hand-outs, etc.). Auditory learner best learns through listening (lectures, discussions, tapes, etc.). Tactile/kinaesthetic learner prefers to learn via experience – moving, touching, and doing (active exploration of the world; science projects; experiments, etc.). Its use in pedagogy allows teachers to prepare classes that address each of these areas. Students can also use the model to identify their preferred learning style and maximize their educational experience by focusing on what benefits them the most.

Some psychologists and neuroscientists have questioned the scientific basis and the theories on which they are based. According to Susan Greenfield the practice is "nonsense" from a neuroscientific point of view: "Humans have evolved to build a picture of the world through our senses working in unison, exploiting the immense interconnectivity that exists in the brain."

Later it was proved [1], that despite the fact a learner has one learning style dominating over others, the best result is achieved when the learner involve all their sensory receptors while receiving and remembering information. The highest level of coherence is called synaesthesia, which is a neurological condition in which stimulation of a sensory or cognitive pathway leads to automatic, involuntary experiences in a second sensory or cognitive pathway [7]. That is, certainly, the most acute manifestation of synaesthesia demonstrated only by unique and extremely gifted individuals. Usually people manifest synaesthesia in the form of strong mental associations between audial, visual or sensitive images of certain object, action or abstract concept.

The results

To begin with I would like to introduce within this article the term auxiliary aids. It means the whole set of visual, audial and kinaesthetic means of study applied in teaching as an addition to standard means (student's book, workbook, CD, etc.). In the definition given, I lay emphasis strongly on the word set, demonstrating that auxiliary aids are used as integrity.

In the view of the aforesaid the most efficient and quick way of learning vocabulary is to use visual, audial and kinaesthetic aids in order to make pupils perceive knowledge applying all their sensory receptors. The main idea of this approach is to combine visual, audial and

kinaesthetic images of a word, word combination or expression for steadier remembering. The simultaneous application of different perception channels makes brain work more efficiently developing memory, intellect and cognition abilities of pupils. The clue for efficient learning is not only the use of all auxiliary aids, but their combinations.

Thus, auxiliary aids include the combinations of visual, audial and kinaesthetic aids. Visual aid, which is defined as an illustrative item, such as a film, slide, or model, designed to supplement the spoken information so that it can be understood more easily. It is any object or picture that relates to the subject being taught. A visual aid is something you bring to support whatever project or report you are discussing. It gives the listener something concrete to look at to enable a better understanding of what you are saying.

It is important to use the stimulation method to teach children. Their minds are sharp and ready to absorb a lot of new information, so they love colour and shapes, pictures and images. Using visual aids can make our lesson more interesting and effective. When pupils can both hear and see what you are saying, they are more likely to retain the information. Visual aids not only focus attention, they reinforce your words.

The use of visual aids in the classroom helps children who are more inclined to learn by sight to become more interested in the subject at hand. There are visual aids for all ages of children that are appropriate for classroom use. Visual aids are meant to be an effective tool to teach a subject and are used in addition to a regular lesson plan.

Audial aids are easily combined with visual ones, for example in films and slideshows.

As for example of exercises combining different auxiliary aids I demonstrate the one I used while undergoing practical training in comprehensive school last year. Teaching 11-years-old pupils (6th form) I used Challenges 2 as it provides the variety of audial and visual aids for vocabulary teaching. Every lesson started with an exercise containing key words and expressions for the class.

In order to combine all the aids I decided to make cards with pictures from Teacher's Handbook. Each card combined the picture denominating some object and its name written on the other side of the card. The combination of pictures and words made it possible to avoid the use of Ukrainian for translating words. Then I used standard audio tracks from Teacher's Handbook CD simultaneously with the use of cards. When the pupils took cards they heard the pronunciation of a word looking at the same time at the picture. Then they turned the card and saw how the word is spelled.

In this way I combined audial (word pronunciation), visual (pictures denominating words) and kinaesthetic (carton cards and their turning) aids to make vocabulary teaching more effective.

Another example of exercise deals with the application of auxiliary aids within role games. For instance, when vocabulary for jobs and professions, I divided my group (10 pupils) into five pairs and each of them got secret task. The main idea of each task was to demonstrate using instruments, pictures, videos how people work and what they do. The group acting doctors brought some medicines, doctor's smocks to school and told about their daily routine. Another group, a pair of boys, demonstrated a short film downloaded about YouTube demonstrating what the people do working in IT. Then they explained some special terms and gave examples of programmers' professional slang. After the demonstration other pupils asked questions and gave their opinion on certain profession.

In this way I united action, visual aids and communication into one exercise with the elements of role game. The result of such application was strong memorising of most lexical units provided during the study and efficiency of the use thereof in classes. A weak point of my method is that it is almost impossible to adjust the ratio of single methods within the whole scope as the result of different learning styles of pupils in the group; the result also varies depending on the dominating learning style within the group. However, the strong point is that all exercises involve all learning styles and implicate more neural centres in brain making memorising quicker and more effective.

Conclusion

The active vocabulary of an English speaker is increasing causing the need of more effective vocabulary teaching. This presupposes profound understanding of how people learn and perceive information.

Three basic learning styles are visual, audial and kinaesthetic. As for a single person one of these styles is usually dominating and defines the easiest way to learn.

I believe the combination of visual, audial and kinaesthetic aids as integer auxiliary aid is one of the most effective ways of vocabulary teaching. It involves several sensory receptors in learning and thus seems to be more effective then separate components. The combination of different perception channels provides the best results in remembering and simultaneously develops intellect making brain work more intensively. The topic of my article is urgent as the vocabulary of an average English speaker is growing constantly and thus demands from non-native speaker richer vocabulary learnt significantly more rapidly. The role of English is not decreasing in the foreseeable future and the English teaching is still in demand. I believe the next step in vocabulary teaching will be tightly bound with the methods providing the teaching of

speech patterns broadly used in daily communication as well as vocabulary teaching focused on regional standards of English.

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