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IMPROVING THE METHODOLOGY OF USING ILLUSTRATIVE MEANS IN DEVELOPING CLASSROOM LEARNER'S VOCABULARY COMPETENCE

Makhkamova Yulduz Komiljon qizi

English Teacher, Secondary School 60, Yangi Namangan district

Yulduzmakhkamova16@gmail.com

+998998784746

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Abstract: The development of learners' vocabulary competence is one of the fundamental objectives of foreign language education because vocabulary knowledge directly influences learners' ability to understand, produce, and communicate meaningfully in the target language. In classroom contexts, the effectiveness of vocabulary instruction depends not only on the selection of lexical items but also on the methods and teaching resources used to present, practise, consolidate, and assess them. This article examines the potential of illustrative means, including pictures, flashcards, realia, diagrams, visual organisers, photographs, videos, digital images, and other visual resources, for improving learners' vocabulary competence. Particular attention is given to the methodological principles underlying the effective integration of illustrative means into vocabulary instruction. The article argues that visualisation can facilitate the processes of semantic association, memorisation, retrieval, contextualisation, and active use of new lexical items. However, illustrative materials do not automatically improve vocabulary learning; their effectiveness depends on appropriate selection, sequencing, contextualisation, learner participation, and integration with communicative activities. The article proposes a systematic methodology based on five stages: preparation, visual presentation, guided practice, communicative application, and assessment. It also discusses the role of digital illustrative means and learner-generated visual materials in contemporary language classrooms. The findings and methodological recommendations presented in the article may be useful for English language teachers, teacher trainers, curriculum designers, and researchers interested in vocabulary acquisition and visual pedagogy.

Keywords: vocabulary competence, illustrative means, visual aids, vocabulary teaching, language learning, flashcards, realia, visualisation, lexical competence, English language teaching, classroom methodology.

Annotatsiya: O'quvchilarning lug'at boyligini rivojlantirish chet tili ta'limining asosiy maqsadlaridan biridir, chunki lug'at boyligi o'quvchilarning maqsadli tilda tushunish, ishlab chiqarish va mazmunli muloqot qilish qobiliyatiga bevosita ta'sir qiladi. Sinf sharoitida lug'at boyligini o'rgatish samaradorligi nafaqat leksik elementlarni tanlashga, balki ularni taqdim etish, mashq qilish, mustahkamlash va baholash uchun ishlatiladigan usullar va o'qitish resurslariga ham bog'liq. Ushbu maqolada rasmlar, fleshkartalar, realiyalar, diagrammalar, vizual organayzerlar, fotosuratlar, videolar, raqamli tasvirlar va boshqa vizual resurslar kabi tasviriy vositalarning o'quvchilarning lug'at boyligini oshirishdagi salohiyati ko'rib chiqiladi. Lug'at boyligini o'rgatishga tasviriy vositalarni samarali integratsiyalashning asosiy metodologik tamoyillariga alohida e'tibor qaratilgan. Maqolada vizualizatsiya semantik assotsiatsiya, yodlash, qayta tiklash, kontekstualizatsiya va yangi leksik elementlardan faol foydalanish jarayonlarini osonlashtirishi mumkinligi ta'kidlangan. Biroq, tasviriy materiallar lug'at boyligini o'rganishni avtomatik ravishda

yaxshilamaydi; ularning samaradorligi to'g'ri tanlash, ketma-ketlik, kontekstualizatsiya, o'quvchining ishtiroki va kommunikativ faoliyat bilan integratsiyaga bog'liq. Maqolada besh bosqichga asoslangan tizimli metodologiya taklif qilingan: tayyorgarlik, vizual taqdimot, boshqariladigan amaliyot, kommunikativ qo'llanilish va baholash. Shuningdek, unda zamonaviy til sinflarida raqamli tasviriy vositalar va o'quvchi tomonidan yaratilgan vizual materiallarning roli muhokama qilinadi. Maqolada keltirilgan topilmalar va metodologik tavsiyalar ingliz tili o'qituvchilari, o'qituvchi-trenerlar, o'quv dasturlari dizaynerlari va so'z boyligini oshirish va vizual pedagogikaga qiziqqan tadqiqotchilar uchun foydali bo'lishi mumkin.

Kalit so'zlar: so'z boyligi kompetensiyasi, tasviriy vositalar, vizual qo'llanmalar, so'z boyligini o'qitish, til o'rganish, fleshkartalar, realiyalar, vizualizatsiya, leksik kompetensiya, ingliz tilini o'qitish, sinf metodologiyasi.

Аннотация: Развитие лексической компетенции обучающихся является одной из фундаментальных задач обучения иностранным языкам, поскольку владение лексикой напрямую влияет на способность понимать, продуцировать речь и полноценно общаться на изучаемом языке. В условиях учебного процесса эффективность обучения лексике зависит не только от отбора лексических единиц, но и от методов и учебных материалов, используемых для их презентации, отработки, закрепления и контроля. В данной статье рассматривается потенциал наглядных средств — включая рисунки, карточки, реальные предметы (реалии), диаграммы, визуальные органайзеры, фотографии, видеоматериалы, цифровые изображения и другие визуальные ресурсы — для совершенствования лексической компетенции обучающихся. Особое внимание уделяется методическим принципам, лежащим в основе эффективного внедрения наглядных средств в процесс обучения лексике. В статье обосновывается тезис о том, что визуализация способствует процессам семантических ассоциаций, запоминания, извлечения информации из памяти, контекстуализации и активного использования новых лексических единиц. Однако использование наглядных материалов не гарантирует автоматического улучшения результатов обучения лексике; их эффективность зависит от грамотного отбора, последовательности применения, контекстуализации, вовлеченности обучающихся и интеграции с коммуникативными заданиями. Авторы предлагают систематизированную методику, включающую пять этапов: подготовку, визуальную презентацию, отработку под руководством преподавателя, коммуникативное применение и контроль. Также обсуждается роль цифровых наглядных средств и визуальных материалов, создаваемых самими обучающимися, в современном учебном процессе. Представленные в статье выводы и методические рекомендации могут быть полезны преподавателям английского языка, специалистам по подготовке учителей, разработчикам учебных программ и исследователям, интересующимся вопросами усвоения лексики и визуальной педагогикой.

Ключевые слова: лексическая компетенция, наглядные средства, средства визуализации, обучение лексике, изучение языка, карточки, реальные предметы (реалии), визуализация, лексическая компетенция, преподавание английского языка, методика обучения.

Introduction

Vocabulary constitutes one of the central components of communicative competence in a foreign language. Learners may possess knowledge of grammatical structures and pronunciation, but without an adequate lexical repertoire they experience considerable difficulties in expressing ideas, understanding authentic communication, and participating effectively in classroom interaction.

Vocabulary knowledge therefore represents not simply the memorisation of individual words but a complex competence involving knowledge of word meaning, form, pronunciation, grammatical behaviour, collocations, register, contextual use, and associations with other lexical items. The importance of vocabulary in second and foreign language learning has been emphasised by numerous scholars. Nation (2013) points out that vocabulary learning involves knowledge of both the form and meaning of words and their appropriate use. Schmitt (2000) similarly argues that vocabulary acquisition requires attention to several dimensions of lexical knowledge rather than simple word-definition relationships. In this context, vocabulary instruction should provide learners with multiple opportunities to encounter, understand, retrieve, and use lexical items.

One of the methodological resources that can contribute to this process is the use of illustrative means. Illustrative means may be defined broadly as visual or concrete teaching resources employed to clarify, demonstrate, contextualise, or reinforce linguistic information.

They include pictures, drawings, photographs, flashcards, real objects, posters, charts, diagrams, maps, cartoons, videos, infographics, slides, digital images, and interactive visual materials.

The pedagogical value of visualisation is connected with the fact that learners frequently construct meaning through associations between linguistic information and sensory or contextual information. When a teacher introduces the word apple together with a picture or an actual apple, learners do not need to rely exclusively on a verbal translation. The lexical form becomes associated with a concrete referent. Similarly, abstract vocabulary can be presented through situations, photographs, diagrams, symbols, or sequences of images.

Despite the widespread use of visual materials, their application in language classrooms is not always methodologically systematic. Teachers may use pictures simply to make lessons more attractive without establishing clear learning objectives. A picture may be shown, the teacher may pronounce the word, and students may repeat it, but learners may receive insufficient opportunities to retrieve and use the word independently. Consequently, the presence of an illustrative resource does not necessarily guarantee effective vocabulary acquisition.
The central problem addressed in this article is therefore how the methodology of using illustrative means can be improved so that visual resources become an integral part of systematic vocabulary development rather than merely decorative elements of classroom instruction.

Theoretical Foundations of Vocabulary Competence

Vocabulary competence can be understood as the learner's ability to recognise, understand, retrieve, and appropriately use lexical units in receptive and productive communication. Such competence includes both breadth and depth of vocabulary knowledge. Breadth refers approximately to the number of words a learner knows, whereas depth concerns how well individual words are known.
For example, knowing the word run involves more than knowing its basic meaning. A learner may need to know its pronunciation, grammatical forms, common collocations, different meanings, idiomatic uses, and differences between run, walk, jog, and other semantically related words.

Vocabulary knowledge can therefore be conceptualised through several dimensions: word form, word meaning, pronunciation, spelling, grammatical behavior, collocation, contextual use, semantic relationships, register, productive and receptive use.

Illustrative means can contribute to several of these dimensions. A picture can establish a semantic connection, while a word card can reinforce spelling. A sequence of pictures can

demonstrate contextual or narrative use. A diagram can illustrate semantic relationships, and a video can demonstrate pronunciation, gesture, situation, and pragmatic meaning simultaneously.

The effectiveness of vocabulary learning is also associated with repeated encounters with lexical items. Nation (2013) emphasises the importance of repeated exposure and deliberate learning alongside meaning-focused input and output. Visual materials can facilitate repeated encounters because the same image can be incorporated into several stages of a lesson. For instance, a teacher may initially present a set of pictures representing market, shopkeeper, customer, price, and expensive. Students can subsequently classify the pictures, match them with words, construct sentences, describe the scene, perform a dialogue, and finally complete a communicative task. Thus, one visual resource can support multiple forms of lexical processing.

Illustrative Means in Vocabulary Teaching

Illustrative means can be classified according to their degree of concreteness and technological complexity.

Realia refers to real objects brought into the classroom for instructional purposes. Objects such as books, fruits, clothes, stationery, toys, household items, and tools can provide direct links between words and physical referents. Realia is particularly effective for teaching concrete nouns and action verbs. For example, a teacher can hold a pen, notebook, or ruler while introducing the corresponding lexical items. Students can then manipulate the objects and produce commands such as:

"Pick up the ruler."

"Put the book on the table."

"Give me the pen."

Such activities transform passive recognition into active vocabulary use.

Flashcards are among the most practical visual tools for vocabulary instruction. They can contain pictures, words, or both. Their main advantage is flexibility. Teachers can use flashcards for presentation, matching, categorisation, memory games, guessing activities, pronunciation practice, and retrieval exercises.
An important methodological principle is to avoid using flashcards only for teacher-led repetition. Learners should increasingly become responsible for retrieving the vocabulary. For example, after presenting ten flashcards, the teacher can remove the written labels and ask students to identify the words from the images. Later, students can work in pairs and quiz each other.

Pictures and photographs are especially useful for contextualising vocabulary. A single photograph can introduce numerous lexical items simultaneously. For example, a photograph of a city street may provide opportunities to teach traffic lights, pedestrian, pavement, crossing, vehicle, crowded, building, and intersection.
Pictures can also support inferential learning. Instead of immediately giving translations, the teacher can ask questions that guide learners toward meaning:
"What can you see?"

"Where are they?"

"What is the person doing?"

"Is the street crowded or empty?"

This approach encourages learners to construct meaning from context. *Diagrams and graphic organisers* are particularly appropriate for abstract vocabulary and semantic relationships. A semantic map, for example, can place the word environment at the centre and connect it with pollution, recycling, climate, waste, energy, and conservation. Such visual organisation helps learners perceive relationships among words rather than memorising isolated lexical units. It can also support the development of deeper vocabulary knowledge.

Video and Digital Illustrations. Digital technology has considerably expanded the range of illustrative resources available to teachers. Short videos, animated presentations, interactive images, digital flashcards, virtual objects, and online visual dictionaries can provide multimodal input.

Video has a particular advantage because it combines visual information with sound, movement, context, and sometimes written language. For example, a short video showing people preparing food can provide meaningful exposure to verbs such as cut, pour, mix, boil, and serve. However, digital materials should be selected according to pedagogical objectives rather than technological novelty. A sophisticated video that contains excessive linguistic complexity may be less useful than a simple, carefully selected image.

Conclusion

The development of vocabulary competence is a complex process that requires learners to encounter, understand, remember, retrieve, and use lexical items in meaningful contexts. Illustrative means can significantly contribute to this process by establishing associations between linguistic forms and visual, concrete, and contextual information. The analysis presented in this article demonstrates that pictures, flashcards, realia, photographs, diagrams, videos, and digital visual resources can facilitate vocabulary learning when they are used systematically. Their effectiveness, however, depends on methodological factors such as relevance, clarity, contextualisation, repetition, learner participation, differentiation, and gradual removal of support. The proposed five-stage methodology—preparation, visual presentation, guided practice, communicative application, and assessment—provides a practical framework for integrating illustrative means into classroom vocabulary instruction. The model emphasises that visual materials should not be restricted to the initial presentation of vocabulary. Instead, they should be incorporated into the complete learning cycle, from semantic introduction to independent communicative production. A particularly important conclusion is that illustrative means should function as pedagogical instruments rather than decorative elements. Their purpose is to promote meaningful lexical processing, retrieval, and communication. Teachers should therefore select visual materials according to specific learning objectives and provide learners with opportunities to interact with, manipulate, and ultimately move beyond those visual supports. The integration of traditional and digital illustrative means can further enhance vocabulary instruction, provided that technology remains subordinate to pedagogical objectives. Learner-generated visual materials may also promote autonomy, creativity, and deeper engagement with vocabulary.

Overall, improving the methodology of using illustrative means can contribute to more effective, interactive, contextualised, and learner-centred vocabulary instruction. When visual resources are systematically combined with repetition, retrieval, communicative practice, and assessment, they can become a powerful component of foreign language pedagogy and contribute to the development of learners' sustainable vocabulary competence.

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