

the ARTICLE (for instructors)

Vocabulary: Is it Important?

A beginning student of English says, "Go Canada. Homestay. Next month." Although there is no grammar structure whatsoever, he will still be understood. Similarly, a foreign tourist lost in New York who says, "Where. Subway. Close?" should get directed to the nearest subway station. Such is the power of vocabulary.

For students just beginning to study English, most new words have an immediate and obvious practical use. Because "doctor," "hungry," or "subway" are high frequency words, for example, they quickly become part of their everyday English. However, at higher levels, many students find that new words are used less frequently. They encounter the words, in reading or listening, only occasionally. Therefore, vocabulary acquisition seems less pertinent, at least immediately. New words are also more difficult to remember.

Does that make new vocabulary less important? No, of course not. But it places greater importance on the techniques and strategies students use to retain new words.

First, and perhaps most important, a student needs clear short-term and long-term goals. How many words will he learn within a month? How many words will he learn within six months? Without goals, a student often lacks motivation. But keep the goals reasonable!

Second, when a student encounters a new word, it's always best to guess the meaning from the context of the sentence. After guessing the meaning, then he can check an English-English dictionary. This technique makes his deduction abilities stronger. And yet, if wrong, the student will want to know *why*.

Lastly, it just comes down to hard work. A student should practice writing his own definitions, synonyms, and sentences at home. He should also read or listen to English as much as possible. As a final word of advice: relating new words to personal experience helps.

Teacher's Notes:

* Underlined words in **red typeface** are the recommended vocabulary for this lesson.

WARM-UPS

Select one or all of the following warm-up activities.

1. **Define:** What does "acquisition" mean? Can you use it in a sentence? Can you give examples?

2. **Brainstorm:** Brainstorm with a partner(s) words and ideas associated with "vocabulary acquisition" for 2 minutes. Spend another 5 minutes or less discussing the words and ideas together.

3. **Speculate:** Write in the missing words for today's article title: "Vocabulary: Is () ()?" Why did you choose these words for the blanks?

4. **Do you agree or disagree? Why?**

- | | |
|----|--|
| a. | Studying vocabulary is boring! |
| b. | I rarely bother to use new vocabulary. If I hear or see it, and understand it, that's all right. |
| c. | It's easier to understand new words when they are written rather than when they are spoken. |
| d. | I can learn vocabulary for a test, but I usually forget most of the words a week later. |
| e. | I often write new words in a notebook during class, but I rarely look at the words after class. |

5. **Self-assessment:** Assess how you study and retain vocabulary. Rate all answers with a score of 1 (not a lot / not very well) to 10 (a lot / very well). Compare answers and discuss.

- | | |
|----|---|
| a. | How well do you remember words? |
| b. | How much work do you do to expand your vocabulary? |
| c. | How organized/useful is your vocabulary note-taking? |
| d. | How often do you check dictionaries, thesauri, etc.? |
| e. | How much time do you focus on vocabulary each week |
| f. | How much time do you practice/study English outside of class? |

VOCABULARY

Select one of the following vocabulary acquisition activities.

1. Vocabulary match: Individually or in pairs/groups, match the words in column A (from the article) with the best choice in column B.

a.	whatsoever	q.	relevant
b.	obvious	r.	clear
c.	practical	s.	remember
d.	encounter	t.	framework
e.	pertinent	u.	realistic
f.	retain	v.	reasoning
g.	context	w.	not at all
h.	technique	x.	similar word
i.	deduction	y.	method
j.	synonym	z.	run into

2. Fill in the Blanks: Fill in the blank with the correct word.

	deduction	context	synonyms	retain	pertinent
	encounter	obvious	whatsoever	technique	practical
a.	There is no grammar structure ().				
b.	The need to study advanced vocabulary is less ().				
c.	Many words for beginning students have a (), everyday use.				
d.	Difficult words are () less often in everyday English.				
e.	Words used less often seem less ().				
f.	Strategies and techniques become more important to () new words for higher level students.				
g.	It's best to guess the meaning of a word from the () of the sentence, then check a dictionary.				
h.	There are many () to learn vocabulary.				
i.	It's important to make your () abilities stronger.				
j.	() are useful because they help you remember new vocabulary.				

3. Define: Define each word, correctly pronounce it, explain the meaning and/or usage, and offer an example sentence to the class.

a.	whatsoever	c.	practical	e.	pertinent	g.	context	i.	deduction
b.	obvious	d.	encounter	f.	retain	h.	technique	j.	synonyms

WORD RECOGNITION

1. Word Search: Find the target words (in bold). Time yourself, and see how many words you can find in three minutes. In five minutes. In ten minutes.

deduction	context	synonyms	retain	pertinent
encounter	obvious	whatsoever	technique	practical
E S S M K J Y T Z R P T S T P B N W M O K X Q E T E I U C E X F C I Y E I V V C U Y O T R D K K O T N E M H Z D U I Z T M U N N U O O N B U J Q V F I D I O Y S N I N X M F W B Q N B C O T X Q T R Y L Y F O O E R P A G U N U E W S D D J C N T H N E R X L O R T L T H Y T W N O I T C U D E D B O V M H N G O X I B N H Y L E C H F S R E T A I N G W T M W E I J X P R A C T I C A L R O Y N Q E P G T D B Y M T Z F A I A D I T Y Z L U E O A B H N J T K X				

2. Target Word Pool: Find the target words (in bold) with their exact match. Time yourself, and see how many words you can find in three minutes. In five minutes. In ten minutes.

deduction	context	synonyms	retain	pertinent
encounter	obvious	whatsoever	technique	practical
impractical deduct obverse technicolor retain permanent technology encourage conduction forever encounter pertinent whosoever retainer practically contextual whatever practical counter whatnot obsess return impertinent deduction pertaining encarta deduce dubious queue concise contain context encountering practiced contest antonym synonyms synapse whatsoever obvious pertain technique synonym construct retained techno symphony odious reduction practice				

pre- or post-COMPREHENSION

1. Word Association: Brainstorm words associated with today's topic for two minutes. Present to the class.

2. Brainstorm Questions: Brainstorm questions that you would like to ask about today's topic. Answer the questions without looking at the article.

3. True or False?: Guess (before the article) or answer (after the article) whether the sentence is true or false. If false, give the correct answer.

a.	New words for beginning students have an immediate and practical use.	T / F
b.	Vocabulary acquisition is less important at higher levels than at lower levels.	T / F
c.	Techniques and strategies become more important to remember new words.	T / F
d.	Students should consult an English-English dictionary first when they don't know a word.	T / F
e.	Students should practice writing their own definitions, synonyms, <i>and</i> sentences at home.	T / F

4. Questions: Answer the questions to check comprehension.

a.	Why is vocabulary such a powerful tool for communication?
b.	What problems do higher level students have with vocabulary?
c.	Why is it important to have goals?
d.	What techniques are suggested in the article?
e.	From the information in the article, what does "if you don't use it, you lose it" mean?

5. Vocabulary: In pairs/groups, remember how the words were used in today's article.

a.	whatsoever	c.	practical	e.	pertinent	g.	context	i.	deduction
b.	obvious	d.	encounter	f.	retain	h.	technique	j.	synonyms

6. Fragments: Remember how the fragments were used, and complete the sentence from today's article.

a.	For students just beginning to study English,
b.	Therefore, vocabulary acquisition
c.	First, and perhaps most important,
d.	Second, when a student encounters a new word,
e.	As a final word of advice:

post-COMPREHENSION

1. **Vocabulary:** Circle any additional unknown words/phrases in the article. In pairs/groups, use your dictionaries to understand the meanings. Present to the class.

2. **Class Questions:** Read through the article once more, and write down any questions that you would like to discuss in pairs/groups or as a class. Discuss.

3. **Summarize:** Work with a partner to summarize the article in your own words.

4. **Discuss:** Talk about the following questions in pairs/groups. Remember to support your answers!

a.	Did you like this article?
b.	What strategies do you use to study vocabulary?
c.	What strategies would you like to try to study vocabulary?
d.	Do you agree with the article when it says that higher-level students don't use the vocabulary that they learn in the classroom?
e.	Do you agree with the article's suggestions to retain vocabulary?
f.	Whose responsibility is it to increase vocabulary, the student's or the teacher's?
g.	Which English skill do you think is the most important?
h.	Which English skill is your weakest?
i.	Which English skill would you like to improve?
j.	What short- and long-term goals can you set to help you learn vocabulary?

5. **Role-play:** Student A takes on the role of a teacher, chooses a word (from today's list or another word of his/her choosing), and teaches 1-2 students that word. Be sure to follow the steps given in the article, assign homework, etc. The "students" ask appropriate questions. Switch roles and repeat.

6. **Google Search:** Type "vocabulary" into Google news and read additional articles on this topic. Discuss or write an essay about your findings.

STUDENT HANDOUT (the article)

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A beginning student of English says, "Go Canada. Homestay. Next month." Although there is no grammar structure whatsoever, he will still be understood. Similarly, a foreign tourist lost in New York who says, "Where. Subway. Close?" should get directed to the nearest subway station. Such is the power of vocabulary.

For students just beginning to study English, most new words have an immediate and obvious practical use. Because "doctor," "hungry," or "subway" are high frequency words, for example, they quickly become part of their everyday English. However, at higher levels, many students find that new words are used less frequently. They encounter the words, in reading or listening, only occasionally. Therefore, vocabulary acquisition seems less pertinent, at least immediately. New words are also more difficult to remember.

Does that make new vocabulary less important? No, of course not. But it places greater importance on the techniques and strategies students use to retain new words.

First, and perhaps most important, a student needs clear short-term and long-term goals. How many words will he learn within a month? How many words will he learn within six months? Without goals, a student often lacks motivation. But keep the goals reasonable!

Second, when a student encounters a new word, it's always best to guess the meaning from the context of the sentence. After guessing the meaning, then he can check an English-English dictionary. This technique makes his deduction abilities stronger. And yet, if wrong, the student will want to know *why*.

Lastly, it just comes down to hard work. A student should practice writing his own definitions, synonyms, and sentences at home. He should also read or listen to English as much as possible. As a final word of advice: relating new words to personal experience helps.

Notes:

STUDENT HANDOUT (fill-in the blank)

Fill-in the blank with the correct word.

deduction	technique	immediately	obvious	pertinent
practical	experience	encounter	reasonable	context
directed	retain	whatsoever	beginning	synonyms

Vocabulary: Is it Important?

A beginning student of English says, "Go Canada. Homestay. Next month." Although there is no grammar structure (a. _____), he/she will still be understood. Similarly, a foreign tourist lost in New York who says, "Where. Subway. Close?" should get (b. _____) to the nearest subway station. Such is the power of vocabulary.

For students just (c. _____) to study English, most new words have an immediate and (d. _____) (e. _____) use. Because "doctor," "hungry," or "subway" are high frequency words, for example, they quickly become part of their everyday English. However, at higher levels, many students find that new words are used less frequently. They (f. _____) the words, in reading or listening, only occasionally. Therefore, vocabulary acquisition seems less (g. _____), at least (h. _____). New words are also more difficult to remember.

Does that make new vocabulary less important? No, of course not. But it places greater importance on the techniques and strategies students use to (i. _____) new words.

First, and perhaps most important, a student needs clear short-term and long-term goals. How many words will he/she learn within a month? How many words will he/she learn within six months? Without goals, a student often lacks motivation. But keep the goals (j. _____)!

Second, when a student encounters a new word, it's always best to guess the meaning from the (k. _____) of the sentence. After guessing the meaning, then he/she can check an English-English dictionary. This (l. _____) makes one's (m. _____) abilities stronger. And yet, if wrong, the student will want to know *why*.

Lastly, it just comes down to hard work. A student should practice writing his/her own definitions, (n. _____), and sentences at home. He/She should also read or listen to English as much as possible. As a final word of advice: relating new words to personal (o. _____) helps.

STUDENT HANDOUT (extended listening)

Listen and fill in the missing sentences. Compare answers with a partner, and then listen once more.

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For students just beginning to study English, a) _____.
Because "doctor," "hungry," or "subway" are high frequency words, for example, they quickly become part of their everyday English. However, at higher levels, b) _____. They encounter the words, in reading or listening, only occasionally. Therefore, c) _____.
_____. New words are also more difficult to remember.

Does that make new vocabulary less important? No, of course not. But it places greater importance on the techniques and strategies students use to retain new words.

First, and perhaps most important, d) _____. How many words will he/she learn within a month? How many words will he/she learn within six months? Without goals, a student often lacks motivation. But keep the goals reasonable!

Second, when a student encounters a new word, it's always best to guess the meaning from the context of the sentence. After guessing the meaning, then he/she can check an English-English dictionary. This technique makes one's deduction abilities stronger. And yet, if wrong, the student will want to know *why*.

Lastly, it just comes down to hard work. A student should practice writing his/her own definitions, synonyms, and sentences at home. He/She should also read or listen to English as much as possible. As a final word of advice:

e) _____.

STUDENT HANDOUT (activities)

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary

1. Vocabulary Match:

a.	w	f.	s
b.	r	g.	t
c.	u	h.	y
d.	z	i.	v
e.	q	j.	x

2. Fill in the Blanks:

a.	whatsoever	f.	retain
b.	obvious	g.	context
c.	practical	h.	techniques
d.	encountered	i.	deduction
e.	pertinent	j.	synonyms

pre- or post-Comprehension

1. True or False:

a.	T
b.	F
c.	T
d.	F
e.	T

2. Fragments:

a.	most new words have an immediate and obvious practical use.
b.	seems less pertinent, at least immediately.
c.	a student needs clear short-term and long-term goals.
d.	it's always best to guess the meaning from the context of the sentence.
e.	relating new words to personal experience helps.

Student Handout

1. Fill in the Blanks

a.	whatsoever	i.	retain
b.	directed	j.	reasonable
c.	beginning	k.	context
d.	obvious	l.	technique
e.	practical	m.	deduction
f.	encounter	n.	synonyms
g.	pertinent	o.	experience
h.	immediately		

2. Extended Listening

a.	most new words have an immediate and obvious practical use.
b.	many students find that new words are used less frequently.
c.	vocabulary acquisition seems less pertinent, at least immediately.
d.	a student needs clear short-term and long-term goals.
e.	relating new words to personal experience helps.