

## 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 answers.

**the ARTICLE (for students)**

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.

### STEP ONE

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

### STEP TWO

**Questions:** Read as much of the article as you can in two minutes. Guess the answers to the questions below, then listen to your teacher read the article. Try to confirm your answers.

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?

### STEP THREE

**Fill in the Blanks:** Listen to your teacher read the article again. Fill in the blanks with the missing words.

### STEP FOUR

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

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

### STEP FIVE

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

a.	What strategies do you use to study vocabulary?
b.	What strategies would you like to try to study vocabulary?
c.	Do you agree with the article's suggestions to retain vocabulary?
d.	Whose responsibility is it to increase vocabulary, the student's or the teacher's?