

Teaching Vocabulary: An Introduction to Foreign Language Teaching in India

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Abstract— This monograph on “Teaching Vocabulary” grew out of my teaching and resources production in the field of English Language Teaching as foreign language teaching, for a number of years. I believe that this article will be found highly useful for the teacher training courses in India and South Asia. This article discusses various linguistic, psychological and educational aspects of acquisition, use, and teaching of vocabulary. Initially, the author begins with discussion on the criteria that are used to identify word, the concept of word according to some Indian grammarians, and seeks to classify the vocabulary stock of an individual or of a language according to certain criteria on the basis of the shared characteristics of vocabulary. It further discusses how vocabulary items are generated in a language. In order to prepare the instructional materials, and in order to understand the vocabulary of the speakers of a language, various types of vocabulary studies are conducted in India and abroad.

Key words: Vocabulary, Teaching, Concept, Kinds, Methods.

I. INTRODUCTION

This article discusses various linguistic, psychological and educational aspects of acquisition, use, and teaching of vocabulary.

The first chapter discusses the criteria that are used to identify word, the concept of word according to some Indian grammarians, and the number and length of words in a language along with a universal definition of word.

The second chapter seeks to classify the vocabulary stock of an individual or of a language according to certain criteria on the basis of the shared characteristics of vocabulary. It further discusses the classification of the vocabulary items in the language of children and adults.

The third chapter discusses how vocabulary items are generated in a language. Whenever there is a need for vocabulary item in a language it has to produce the needed vocabulary by some means or the other. These methods of vocabulary production intensely focus on this chapter. In order to prepare the instructional materials, and in order to understand the vocabulary of the speakers of a language, various types of vocabulary studies are conducted in India and abroad. Some of these vocabulary studies are discussed in the eighth chapter.

Better understanding of vocabulary leads to better teaching of vocabulary both in the context of first language teaching and in teaching the same language as a second language. So, in the ninth chapter, methods of teaching vocabulary and the various aspects of vocabulary are discussed.

A. Word And Vocabulary:

The concept of word is definable only in terms of specific structural characteristics of individual languages. That is, "word" is unique and specific to individual languages. It is also true that speakers across languages have certain intuitive notions about the universal characteristics of the concept of word. Through such intuitive notions they are able to distinguish what a word is, even in a language not known to them very well.

An unambiguous and universal definition of word is not available or possible for many reasons. Each language has its own unique structural arrangements of its units that are not exactly similar to the structural patterns of any other language. Every word is a complex organization of different aspects, linguistic and extra-linguistic. Because of this, researchers have difficulty in capturing all the intricacies of language organization and word organization to arrive at a universal definition of word. However, attempts have been made both to define word in the context of a particular language and to define it universally.

In all the scholarly attempts to define word, the general features that are identified and included in the definition remained the same, but the weight given to each of these features and the componential organization of these features in the definition of word differed.

1) Identification Of Word:

There are six important criteria used to define word. These are spatial representation of word, meaning, the intonation with which a word is pronounced, its vowel harmony, its non-amenability to have other items inserted, and its indivisibility.

The first criterion is about the distribution of words in printed space. In the written representation of the language, a linguistic form between spaces is identified as word because of the convention of leaving space between two words in writing or in printing. But this criterion cannot be applied to identify and isolate words in the spoken language. Moreover, not all the languages are represented in writing. Also in the case of compound words and in the case of inflected forms, this criterion will lead to the identification of the inflected forms as words, although these inflected forms may be more than words in some sense.

The second criterion that is used to identify a word is meaning. This criterion is based on the belief that each word has a meaning, and that, in a language, each unit of meaning or segment of meaning could be identified and separated from other units of meaning. Each item thus separated is called a word. This cannot be used as an independent criterion to define word because the meaning factor used here poses a problem in distinguishing morpheme and word. When this criterion alone is applied to identify a word, it is not possible to distinguish between a

word, a phrase and an idiom; even groups of words that combine to give a single meaning will come under this category. Another problem with this criterion is that of word boundary and meaning boundary; if they coincide it is all right; if they do not coincide, this criterion will not work.

In some languages, the feature of stress is used as a criterion to identify the word, because, in these languages, stress falls on a particular syllable in each word. In other words, the position of stress in a word is fixed. Using this criterion it is easy to identify in speech these stressed syllables and, in turn, the words.

It can be said that the criterion of isolation and insertion come into operation normally after the identification of a word in order to check and confirm whether a particular item is a word or not. If it is not possible to insert any other linguistic feature into the identified unit, it is taken as a word. If insertion is possible, it may not be a word. If the identified word can occur in isolation in the natural language usage context, it is confirmed that it is a word. If it cannot occur in isolation, it is not a word. So, word is taken as an indivisible entity.

In conclusion, it may be said that it may not be possible to apply a single criterion to identify a word, but recognition of a unit as a word is generally possible with the application of all these criteria.

B. Indian Grammarians' Concept Of Word:

1) Panini And Word:

In most traditional Indian grammars, there are certain elements of grammar like pratyaya, priiti-padika, and prakruti that are used as tools to characterize a word or pada. In Asthadyaayi, Panini identifies word as the one that ends with sup the case suffix or the tin the tense affix (1.4.14).

2) Kesiraja And Word:

The Kannada grammar Shabdamani Darpana is the oldest grammar available in Kannada. In this grammar, believed to have been written in the 13th century, Keshiraja identifies word as a combination of prakruti and pratyaya. And in places where there is no pratyaya, it is stated that it should be considered as absent or covert. The translation of the sutra that identifies the word is as follows: "Vibhakti is so called because it divides the meaning of the word. It is also known as pratyaya (suffix), The base (prakruti) takes its position before the suffix. These two join into a word" (Kulli: 1976). This definition clearly indicates the process that guides the identification of the word in Kannada. The criterion of affixation used by him resembles exactly that of Panini. The only difference is that Panini's definition includes both case and tense suffixes but Kesiraja's definition includes only case suffixes.

This definition of Kesiraja is unambiguous enough to identify a word in Kannada, because in stating the options he says that avyaya-s (indeclinable) to which the case suffixes are not added also should be considered as pada 'word', because they have covert case suffixes which have been deleted.

3) Tolkappiyam And Word:

Tolkappiyam, the ancient Tamil Grammar, rather than defining word, identifies certain characteristics of word. These characteristics are:

- "155. All the words indicate objects.

- 156. The scholars say that a word can denote the nature of its object and its form.
- 157. They say that the knowing of the object is of two ways - directly and by suggestion.
- 158. The linguists say that the words are said to be of two kinds, noun and verb.
- 159. They say that the morpheme (iDiccol) and semontemes (uricol) may appear depending upon them" (Ilakkuvanar: 1963).

If the three definitions of word offered by Panini, Kesiraja, and Tolkappiyar (the author of Tolkappiyam) are compared, it can be said that Panini and Kesiraja used affixation as the process to identify word, and that Tolkappiyar used the semantic criterion to locate the word and referred both nouns and verbs. It appears, then, that the Indian grammarians generally looked at word as a composite form of free and bound forms and defined it on the basis of the criterion of grammatical category.

4) A Universal Definition Of Word:

After discussing many definitions of word and their drawbacks, Kramsky (1969) attempts a definition that is applicable to words in most of the languages of the world. However, because of the limitation of the definition, he does not call it a universal definition. He states, "The word is the smallest independent unit of language referring to a certain linguistic reality or to a relation of such realities and characterized by certain formal features (acoustic, morphemic) either actually (as an independent component of the context) or potentially (as a unit of the lexical plan)."

At this juncture one may recall Graff (1929) who identified the errors that are made in defining word. According to him, in defining the words:

- Inadequate importance is ascribed to a phonetic or semantic feature at the expense of complex, semantic-phonetic combination.
- The relation of the word to the sentence and vice versa is wrongly appreciated.
- The character of the word is often identified with its quantitative extension, or at least, the character and the quality of the word are not strictly separated.
- Facts relating to the evolution of language are strictly separated from those relating to the state system.

5) Alternative Notions Of Word:

Because of the difficulties one faces in defining word in languages, attempts were made to identify certain concepts that might solve the problem of identification of the word. One such attempt is that of Harold Palmer, and his concept of monolog, miolog, and phiolog, where monologs are 'words in conventional sense, represented graphically by a group of letters beginning and ending with a space functionally independent unit; miologs as being components of monologs, and recognizable linguistically as derivational and inflexional affixes and are made up of two or more monologs; and phiologs as being units containing monologs but representing in some way a semantic entity. In this classification, says Bunkin (1968) 'the miolog involves us in morphology, the phiolog in syntax.'

C. Length And Number Of Words In A Language:

An observation of the data from various languages indicates the fact that neither the length of the word nor the total vocabulary of any two languages coincides with each other.

Komlev (1976) attributes the reason for this disparity to the dependence of these factors on the 'number of phonemes in the language' and says that 'the length is inversely proportional to the number of phonemes in the phonological system of the language.' And according to him the size of the vocabulary of the language depends upon 'the imminent structures of the language and the extra-linguistic causes.

D. Word And Vocabulary:

Word and vocabulary are the two terms that are used often as synonyms. Broadly speaking, one may not make any distinction between these two, but when it comes to the precise and technical way of handling these, the difference is evident as these are two different concepts.

We have seen above that the term word refers to an individual entity. The term vocabulary, however, is a term referring to a collective concept; it refers to a collection of many entities that are called words. Vocabulary refers to the total or partial stock of words that an individual or a language has. The term word is widely spoken about in linguistics and the term vocabulary in the field of education, one at the theoretical level of understanding and the other at the practical level of application.

II. TYPES OF VOCABULARY

Vocabulary occupies a central place in language. In every language, vocabulary of that language can be distinguished from other non-vocabulary entities of that language.

The vocabulary items of a language can also be classified under various groups on the basis of the features shared by the vocabulary items of individual groups.

Each vocabulary item may have its own characteristics in terms of meaning and grammatical function.

Though vocabulary acquisition in children begins roughly by the end of the 12th month, it continues and ends only with the death of an adult. The characteristics of children's vocabulary differ from those of adult vocabulary. For example, a vocabulary item belonging to the noun category or the verb category may not function as a noun or a verb in the child's language.

Because of these functional differences we classify the vocabulary of a language into two major groups: children's vocabulary and adult's vocabulary.

A. Children's Vocabulary:

For the classification of vocabulary of children, various criteria have been used. These criteria include position and manner of occurrence of vocabulary in child speech, store of the vocabulary items, the productive or receptive abilities of the child, retention or loss of vocabulary items learned by the child, and the domains in which the vocabulary items are used.

One can classify the children's vocabulary into four types as follows:

- Pivot and open.
- Receptive and use.

- Cumulative and non-cumulative.
- General and special.

1) Pivot And Open:

The pivot class words are also called close-class words. The important characteristics of pivot and open class vocabulary are as follows:

- Pivot class words are small in number.
- Pivot class words cannot occur alone as an independent sentence in one word utterance.
- Pivot class words are more frequent than the words of open class.
- Pivot class words can occur in only one position in an utterance and they have a fixed position.
- Pivot class words can join with any word in the other class to form an utterance but not with another word of the same class.
- Pivot class words are acquired slowly.
- Pivot class words are restricted mainly to the two-word stage in child's language acquisition. Pivot class words are rare once the child reaches the multi-word stage.

Open class words are also called free-class words. The important characteristics of open class words are as follows:

- Open class words are more in number.
- Open class words can occur alone as an independent sentence in one word utterances.
- Open class words are less frequent in the initial stages of language acquisition.
- Open class words can occur in both the initial and final positions in an utterance.
- Open class words can join with a word of its own class or with the word of the other class to form an utterance.
- Open class words are added regularly and frequently to the child's vocabulary.

Pivot class words and Open class words are generally complementary to one another as regards their position of occurrence in a construction.

Liles (1975) says that this pivot and open distinction is between nouns and non-nouns. And it is also argued that the generalizations said above are very general in nature and are not applicable to all the children belonging to all the languages.

2) Receptive And Use Vocabulary:

The child responds positively to a certain amount of vocabulary items that he listens to, but is able only to use a few of them. Accordingly one classifies the children's vocabulary into receptive and use vocabularies. In the case of receptive vocabulary:

- The child will know the meaning.
- He will respond appropriately to it when it is spoken to him.
- He does not use it on his own. The use vocabulary consists of all the words that a child actually uses in his utterances.

3) Cumulative And Non-Cumulative Vocabulary:

Language acquisition by a child is a cumulative process. Every moment of his exposure to language adds some grammatical item or the other into the language arena of the child. So is the case with the acquisition of vocabulary also. The child goes on accumulating vocabulary items as he gets

exposed to the vocabulary items. But not all the vocabulary items to which the child is exposed would enter his active arena.

While need-filling motive ensures addition of certain vocabulary items, certain vocabulary items may be lost for other reasons. This function of addition and deletion of vocabulary items in the child language compels one to classify the vocabulary items into cumulative and non-cumulative groups. The vocabulary that continues to be in use after its acquisition, either at the receptive or at the use levels in the language of a child is cumulative vocabulary. The vocabulary items that drop out, after their use on a few occasions are non-cumulative vocabulary.

4) *General And Special Vocabulary:*

This particular type of vocabulary classification perhaps falls within the category of adult's vocabulary classification. The general vocabulary consists of such words as man, nice, and goes which can be used in a variety of situations. The special vocabulary, on the other hand, consists of words with specific meanings that can be used only in certain situations (Hurlock 1972). Some of the special vocabulary groups are:

- Colour vocabulary.
- Number vocabulary.
- Time vocabulary.
- Money vocabulary.
- Slang vocabulary.
- Swearing vocabulary

B. *Adult's Vocabulary:*

The classification of vocabulary as adult's vocabulary has great pedagogical implications. In fact this classification is motivated and guided by pedagogical needs which in turn have led to a finer classification of adult's, vocabulary. The important types of adult's vocabulary are:

- Active and passive
- Recognition and reproduction
- Writing, reading, speaking and potential or , marginal vocabulary
- Academic and non-academic.
- Form and content.
- Concrete and abstract.
- Basic.
- Graded.
- Recall.
- Common.
- Cognate.
- Dialect.
- Archaic, and
- Technical

1) *Active And Passive Vocabulary:*

This is a most convenient and popular, but at the same time, a vague way, to classify vocabulary. The criterion that is used to differentiate active vocabulary from passive vocabulary is the kind of repertory of use to which the vocabulary item belongs.

Child (1973) considers the 'number of words we actually use' as active vocabulary and the 'larger number we are able to understand' as passive vocabulary.

According to Finocchiaro (1958), the active vocabulary is the one that is learned very intensively with

respect to form, meaning, and use in such a way that the learner will be able to use it in all the listening, speaking, reading, and writing activity. In contrast, the passive vocabulary is the one that is understood by the students in a spoken or written context, but the student cannot reproduce the same on his own.

This definition of Finocchiaro provides a pedagogic dimension to active and passive vocabulary. But this type of vocabulary classification does not help much to solve the pedagogic problems. The same vocabulary item which is in active use today may become a passive vocabulary item tomorrow; the vice versa of this is also true. That is, passive vocabulary item of today may become an active one tomorrow.

It is important to note that the quantum of passive vocabulary in the stock of vocabulary of an individual is very high, compared to that of active vocabulary of an individual. This is so because passive vocabulary could include also the active vocabulary. The active vocabulary items of an individual may be more frequency used in the language when compared to the frequency of the passive vocabulary items that an individual has. This need not, however, be true for all vocabulary items and for all individuals and the contexts.

2) *Recognition And Reproduction Vocabulary:*

Recognition vocabulary is defined as that which is recognized or identified in listening or reading responses. The reproduction vocabulary is identified either in spoken or written responses. The recognition vocabulary of an individual is much larger than his reproduction vocabulary.

3) *Writing, Reading, Speaking And Potential Or Marginal Vocabulary:*

The terminology itself reveals the criterion used to classify the vocabulary. Here, language skills are used as a criterion to classify the vocabulary items. As per Seegers (1944), writing vocabulary includes all the words one uses or should be able to use in writing. Reading vocabulary is that which comprises the words one uses or should be able to use in reading. Speaking vocabulary is that which is usually quite different from the reading vocabulary. It is typically more informal. It includes many words that are not frequently written or found in reading materials.

Potential or the marginal vocabulary is that which has to do with words which one has not met, but which he could interpret because of their form or through context. Manning (1969) suggests that the listening or speaking vocabulary is learned somewhat naturally, but reading and writing vocabulary is the one which is learnt through more formal means. However, it is difficult to agree with Manning because even the vocabulary items that are in the spoken form of the language may have been learned through formal means many a time. At the same time all the reading and writing vocabulary items need not be learned through formal means only.

4) *Academic And Non-Academic Vocabulary:*

The vocabulary items that are acquired informally and that do not cause any difficulty in learning are called non-academic vocabulary. Vocabulary items that are formal, used more in writing than in speaking, and are associated with sciences, humanities, and other areas of formal learning are called academic vocabulary.

5) *Form And Content Vocabulary:*

Leaving aside all the extra-language criteria for the classification of vocabulary, Michael West takes language structure as the major criterion to classify vocabulary. He classifies the words broadly into two major categories, with some sub-categories under each major category.

a) *Form Words:*

- Essential words
- General words

b) *Content Words:*

- Common environmental words
- Specific words

Form words are words that we speak with, and are liable to be used in any discourse on any subject. They make up the structure of the language. According to West, the essential words are nearly 150 in number and these are pronouns, conjunctions, etc. The general words are also structural in function but they are more refined, more limited in meaning and usage; and the less frequent general words are more stylistic.

Content words are the words that speakers use to talk about objects, events, etc. They constitute the substance of their talk, whereas common environmental words are words connected with things that are a part of the environment of all men.

Specific words are words that are peculiar to one group of men. The important characteristics of content words that are identified by West are as follows:

- Most of the content words are simple in structure. They have only one or a few related meanings.
- They are innumerable.
- Secret language. They are unpredictable.

Nisbet (1960) agrees with West, and follows the same vocabulary classification. He suggests 300 words as essential words. Words like say, which is a general word for reply, ask, declare, but food and eat as common environmental words. Chalk, pencil, etc., are specific words.

Some other characteristics of form words are as follows:

- They can be comparatively more easily omitted in telegrams.
- They are not an open set because easy addition to this group is not possible and also it is difficult to replace them by another alternative form by creation.

The characteristics of content words are as follows:

- They cannot be easily omitted in telegrams.
- They are an open set because easy addition to this group is possible and also it is possible to replace them by another alternative form by coinage or borrowing.

6) *Concrete And Abstract Vocabulary:*

The concrete vocabulary represents the concrete entity, the entity that can be physically perceived through the sense either in the form of objects or in the form of events. In turn, vocabulary items representing the entities like love, soul, and fear can be called abstract vocabulary because the entities represented by these vocabulary items cannot be easily and physically perceived but need to be imagined

mentally. They are only psychological realities and not the physical entities.

Note also the difference between the concrete and abstract vocabulary items in terms of their realization in the language. For example, book has a uniform realization in the speakers, whereas the mental image that the words soul, beauty, etc. conjure up is different in different speakers of the same language.

7) *Basic Vocabulary:*

Basic vocabulary is more widely talked about than any other type of vocabulary. Basic vocabulary is assumed to be the core of the total vocabulary of a language. That is, it consists of all the vocabulary items that are found in daily use in listening, speaking, reading, and writing contexts of the speakers of that language. It excludes all other vocabulary items that are not found in their everyday language activity. Thus, the most frequent words that occur in the daily language activities are the basic vocabulary of the language. Further, it is assumed that the basic vocabulary consists only of the root words and not the derivatives.

The underlying assumption is that if one is taught the basic vocabulary and the rules of manipulation of these vocabulary items in appropriate contexts, both linguistic and social, a learner would be capable of operating with a much wider vocabulary range than covered by the basic vocabulary. The question of the utility of basic vocabulary arises in the context of teaching a language as a second language, and also in the context of teaching a language as first language in the adult education programs, because in these cases much has to be achieved within the shortest duration.

In the case of basic vocabulary research also, while one scholar considers a particular vocabulary item as an item of basic vocabulary, another scholar may consider the same item as a non-basic vocabulary item. This is due to differences in their approach to the study of the vocabulary of languages. The reasons are given in Chapter Seven.

There is another criterion for identifying certain vocabulary as basic vocabulary of a language. This is based on the assumption that all languages have vocabulary items for certain concepts representing certain things and situations irrespective of the culture and the environment they represent. Here the concept of basic vocabulary has been defined in terms of meaning. The basic vocabulary list prepared on this model consists of 200 words like and, all, at, etc.

8) *Graded Vocabulary:*

The graded vocabularies are those that are graded in accordance with age or school grade of the pupil. Wherever possible, the lists of graded vocabularies try to accommodate both these variables, merge them, and form a single criterion to classify the vocabulary items of the language.

Though there is not any gradation inherent in the vocabulary of the language, it is possible to classify the vocabulary using these criteria.

This type of vocabulary classification has great pedagogical implications and benefits. It is expected that the vocabulary items used by the children of a particular school grade should find place in the teaching, learning, and reading material that is meant for that particular age and grade. These vocabulary items can also be used in the

construction of aptitude tests, and other vocabulary tests intended to measure verbal intelligence. It is also true that differences in gradation may be found even when two researchers have employed the same set of criteria variables.

9) *Recall Vocabulary:*

The concept of recall vocabulary serves pedagogical purposes well, when recall and the content to recall are decided and defined on the basis of the contexts in which recall vocabulary are used. However, the items that constitute a recall vocabulary set may differ from one individual to another.

Let us take a situation in which a language is to be taught to an individual or to a group of people as second language. Our objective here is to train these persons to handle situations 'a, b, c...' with the help of the second language. We ask the mother tongue speakers of that language, who are actually attuned to the situations 'a, b, c...' to recall all the vocabulary items they prefer to make use of in the situations 'a, b, c...' The vocabulary items collected in this way form the recall vocabulary of the language 'x' for 'a, b, c...' situations. Such vocabulary can be used in the construction of instructional material intended for specific groups of people to handle specific situations. Also the same vocabulary may be used in the construction of tests to measure the language competence of the mother tongue speakers in the 'a, b, c...' situations.

There is another way of recalling vocabulary items also. One can list as many semantic categories (like animals, vegetables, etc..) as possible and ask the relevant speakers of that language to recall the vocabulary items under each of the semantic categories given to them.

10) *Common Vocabulary:*

When we consider the vocabulary of two or more languages that are genetically related, we speak of cognate vocabulary. Languages, even when not genetically related, may have vocabulary items common to them for several reasons. In such conditions we talk of common vocabulary.

When languages have contact with each other, they tend to share vocabulary items. Languages A and B may not have contact with each other directly, but due to their contact with a third language C, they may share vocabulary items.

The criteria used to determine the commonness of vocabulary between two or more languages include the similarity and the dissimilarity in terms of shape and meaning of the vocabulary items in both the languages. While studying the common vocabulary of two or more languages it is customary to classify them into a few groups on the basis of the similarity and differences in terms of shape and meaning. They are:

- vocabulary items that have similar shape in both the languages with similar meaning in the both languages,
- vocabulary items that have dissimilar shape in both the languages with similar meanings in both the languages,
- vocabulary items that have similar shape in both the languages with different meanings in both the languages, and
- vocabulary items that have similar shape in both the languages but with deleted or added meanings in both the languages.

The commonness in the vocabulary of the two or more language can be exploited to the maximum in teaching those languages, and in the production of instructional materials.

11) *Cognate Vocabulary:*

When we speak of the vocabulary of genetically related languages, we speak of cognate vocabulary. It is quite natural for the genetically related languages to have vocabulary items common to them, with wide range of similarity and dissimilarity in shape and meaning. While using these cognate vocabularies for the teaching and preparation of instructional materials, another type of vocabulary is also considered. This is the category of the vocabulary items that are common to two or more genetically related languages, not because of genetic relationship, but because of borrowing from the same source.

These vocabulary items taken into two or more genetically related languages from a third source are also very useful for the teaching and learning process.

12) *Dialect Vocabulary:*

Vocabulary items that are identified with a particular socio-economic group of speakers of a language, or identified with the speakers in a particular geographic region, are called dialect vocabulary and these vocabulary items are normally absent in the standard language. These can be found in the regional literature produced by writers belonging to a particular class or region. The place and use of the dialect vocabulary in the teaching and learning of a particular language as mother tongue or as a second language is not yet clear.

13) *Archaic Vocabulary:*

Due to linguistic and non-linguistic reasons, vocabulary items may fall out of use from the current spoken and written language. Such vocabulary items that fall into disuse are called archaic vocabulary. These vocabulary items are naturally found in old written literature and also in folk literature. There are also the possibilities that a lesser-known dialect of the same language may have more archaic items in currency. When a language has to be used in newer circumstances, that language may borrow the archaic vocabulary from that dialect or from the old literature of the same language.

14) *Technical Vocabulary:*

Technical vocabulary is a special vocabulary, generally within the group of learned vocabulary. Here is an intimate relation between the concept that is being expressed by the word and the word itself.

Technical vocabulary forms a major constituent of a topic or subject. A technical vocabulary item belonging to a particular technical subject or technical context indicates specific meanings, the same item with the same physical features. But, in the context of another technical subject or technical context, it may indicate different specific meanings.

At times, a vocabulary item used as a technical term may indicate one meaning in the technical content and another different meaning in the language of daily life. For example, sound in physics is different from sound in physical education, and sound in the language of day-to-day life. This is an important characteristic of the technical vocabulary.

In most of the languages, the technical vocabulary is 'created' along with technical inventions either by borrowing, or by translating the concept into the native language. Except in a very few rare cases, it is generally acquired through formal learning. It is used by specific groups of people for specific purposes and not learned in isolation. This category of vocabulary remains a part of the professional domains of the native speakers of a language.

III. TEACHING VOCABULARY

Let us consider a few differences in the teaching of vocabulary of the first and the second languages. This would enable us to discuss vocabulary teaching in a proper perspective.

A. First Language Teaching:

- Generally involves teaching written representation for the spoken vocabulary.
- In some languages teaching the terms in written language corresponding to the items in the spoken language.
- Involves the extension of the vocabulary knowledge that a learner has.
- Involves teaching those items with the help of which a learner can acquire additional items.
- The learner knows the derivational processes of word formation.
- The learner has to acquire the mastery of vocabulary usage for effective communication, stylistic purpose, etc.
- More of synonyms, idioms, and set phrases.

B. Second Language Teaching:

- Generally involves teaching the spoken as well as written forms of the vocabulary.
- This teaching is done usually at a later level of learning.
- Involves teaching the vocabulary items appropriate for the concepts for which the learner already has vocabulary items in his mother tongue.
- Involves teaching the items with the help of which the learner can acquire additional items.
- The learners do not know the derivational processes of word formation.
- He has to acquire vocabulary for general and basic communication purposes.

1) First Language Teaching And Vocabulary Teaching:

There are certain strategies adopted by the teachers to teach vocabulary to these groups of learners. These strategies include both formal strategies of having a vocabulary item before the teacher and attempting to teach it directly to them, and informal strategies of asking the learner to learn the vocabulary item when he comes across it while listening or reading something or the other in that language. These two strategies are not mutually exclusive; rather they complement each other.

We cannot suggest specific steps that could be strictly followed in teaching vocabulary items. At the application level, strategies vary not only from teacher to teacher, and context to context, but also from language to language. The structure of the vocabulary item including its

derivational history from other items, its connotation and denotation, and the function it performs in a lesson are some other variables.

In a formal approach to teaching vocabulary,

- We concentrate only on the vocabulary skill, not on any other related skills.
- The learner is conscious of the learning that is taking place because of teaching.
- The teacher performs the act of teaching.
- The activities are pre-planned and programmed. Results are specified in advanced.
- Teaching emphasizes direct learning.

In case of informal strategies,

- The focus is not only on the vocabulary skill but also on other related skills.
- The learner is not conscious of the learning that is taking place because of teaching.
- The learner is not conscious about the vocabulary that he is learning.
- The teacher may not perform the act of teaching, and there may not be any formal role for teacher here. The learning process is unplanned and accidental.
- The teaching emphasizes contextual learning.

2) Aspects Of Vocabulary In Relation To Teaching:

a) Pronunciation:

When we teach vocabulary we should know what aspects of vocabulary need to be taught in order to make the learner learn the vocabulary better and faster. The first and foremost aspect is the teaching of pronunciation of the vocabulary. The teacher may have to teach the pronunciation of the vocabulary since the spelling system in some languages such as English may not correlate with the pronunciation. Even if there is correlation, in many cases it will be essential to teach the accurate and standard pronunciation of the vocabulary item to the learner. In Indian languages, aspiration requires a special effort. In some Indian languages, for example, in Tamil, the laterals require some special effort.

b) Spelling:

The second aspect that needs to be taught is spelling. When a new word is taught it has to be taught along with its spelling and its variations, if any. It is possible that the same vocabulary item is written with several different spellings, e.g., organize, organize, color, colour. The learner should know, or at least be aware of the possibility for such variations. Indian languages abound in such problems.

c) Grammatical Category:

The third aspect is the teaching of the grammatical category. Words in a language belong to one or the other grammatical category. The learner needs to understand the function that a word performs in a sentence and in a language, i.e., he should know the grammatical category to which the word belongs. At times he will have to use the same word in more than one category. He may come across a situation in which a particular word is used in a grammatical category different from its earlier use.

d) *Derivation:*

The fourth aspect of vocabulary teaching is the teaching of vocabulary derivation. In a language, not all the vocabulary items are productive and items that are productive are also not equally productive. The learning will be greater and teaching effort will be minimized if all or many of the possible derivatives of a particular vocabulary item are brought to the notice of the learners.

e) *Etymology:*

Etymology is an important aspect of vocabulary but teaching it is only an optional item. Not all the learners need to know the etymology of the word that they are learning. If the teaching of the etymology can help the learner in understanding other aspects of vocabulary, it may be taught. Etymological history of a vocabulary item can often be used as a motivation for its learning and retention by an imaginative teacher, because behind every word lies interesting information. But in the hands of an unimaginative teacher, etymological information becomes a burden for the learners.

f) *Meaning:*

It has been wrongly assumed by language teachers that vocabulary teaching is only the teaching of meaning; that too, only one meaning which the vocabulary item has got in the context of the sentence or phrase in which it is used. But meaning is a multidimensional feature, namely, aspects of similar meaning, different shades of meaning, and the opposite meanings.

g) *Usage:*

Usage of a vocabulary item does not end at the level of using it in a sentence in the learning context. The learner should be taught to use it also in an automatized manner. Also the term usage has to be viewed in its literal and functional sense. The learner should be taught to use a vocabulary item in its normal meaning that makes the usage effective and natural.

There are some important variables that govern vocabulary teaching. Teachers should be aware of these variables. These are:

- Teach those items that one does not know.
- Teach new meanings for the vocabulary that one already knows. Teach new ways of using a word that is already known to the learner. (One may ask as to whether teaching the meanings of a word that is already known to the learner is vocabulary teaching. The answer is 'yes', because it involves teaching something about a vocabulary item, which was not known so far to the learners.)
- Teach other aspects of vocabulary not mentioned under 2.
- Intensive teaching of vocabulary in which the teacher teaches less vocabulary in more contexts, aiming at the qualitative control of vocabulary by the learner.
- Extensive teaching of vocabulary in which the teacher teaches more vocabulary items, aiming at enriching the total vocabulary of the learner.

3) *Formal Strategies:*

The formal strategies of vocabulary teaching may appear to be artificial. These strategies utilize word lists of the types discussed in the earlier chapter on vocabulary studies. The learner is provided with the desired or fixed quantum of vocabulary to learn at the rate fixed by the teacher. The stages of vocabulary teaching through vocabulary lists are as follows:

- The teacher reads the word with the accurate pronunciation until the learners grasp the pronunciation. The teacher may ask the students also to repeat it along with him.
- The teacher spells the word in accordance with the syllabification followed in the target language.
- The teacher writes the same on the board.
- The teacher gives the (frequent) meaning that he anticipates the students to learn, or he may ask the learner to look into the dictionary and search and tell the meaning in the form of definition.
- The teacher uses the word in one or more sentences depending on the meaning or meanings that he is teaching.
- The teacher asks the learners to use those words in their own sentences.
- The teacher may also try to elicit from the children as many correct sentences as possible using these words. This is said to be a boring and an ineffective method, because the learner will be learning without any experience with words, and it remains only as an exercise.

a) *Synonyms And Antonyms:*

This is also one of the popular ways of vocabulary teaching. Here the teacher provides one word in a pair of synonym/antonym to the student and asks him to give the word that means the same, or that means exactly the opposite to the key word. He provides the key word and also gives the alternative words, and asks the learners to memorize them. In most of the cases, he may ask them to use these in their own sentences. The teachers also use sketches, pictures, and exercises to impart understanding and practice in using root words, prefixes, and suffixes. This is a passive mode of vocabulary teaching because the learning takes place without language experience. Another important pedagogical handicap is that the fine distinctions of meaning that exist among words may not come to the notice of the learner, and he may tend to use them in contrast, and lose the effective style of writing and conversing. The third constraint is that all languages may not have the same quantum of synonyms and antonyms.

b) *Derivation:*

Vocabulary teaching is done here with the help of the process of derivation. This method analyzes the structure of derived vocabulary item and teaches the learner to make analogical creations on the model of the key. The teachers take one particular derived word and break it into as many derivational components as possible and explain the meaning expressed by each component and the derived content. Then they give some words that undergo similar type of derivational process. Later the teacher may ask the

student to use the analogically derived words in their own sentences. Here the teacher adopts the inductive method. This process increases the word power of the learners because it develops their insight into the way that words are formed and used. Here not only words derived with the help of affixes are taken into consideration but also compound words are taught. This is an interesting process by which the learner can increase his word power and understand word structure.

c) *Word Games:*

This is not an independent way of teaching vocabulary. But it is an interesting exercise where the learner is expected to use his knowledge of vocabulary and to learn new words in context. Many types of word games that suit the vocabulary structure of the particular language are formed and administered.

d) *Vocabulary Records:*

The teachers may advise the language learners to keep a record of the vocabulary that they are taught in the classroom, or the vocabulary that they come across in informal contexts in an alphabetical order or any other order which the learner feels convenient for him. Another procedure that these formal strategies follow in vocabulary teaching is the dictionary study where the student is advised to keep a dictionary with him and study one page or two pages at a given time. All these are called artificial because none of these modes reflect the actual usage situations.

4) *Informal Strategies:*

The individual speaker bases informal strategies of vocabulary teaching on an important assumption that rich experience is the tool for the acquisition of a rich vocabulary. It is also based on the assumption that retention is more when learned with experience. So this approach aims at creating wide opportunities for experiences and does not bother about the formality of teaching. Here the learning depends on the creative attitude of the teacher in providing more and more opportunities to learn. He has to take into account the learner's learning capacity and interest because the learner is expected to involve himself completely in the process of learning. Some of the things that characterize this approach are that learning here is natural and direct. From the point of view of teaching, however, it is not planned well and is not orderly. A proper blend of the two types of strategies is required in Indian classrooms. Some of the experiences that the teacher arranges for teaching vocabulary through the informal strategies are as follows:

- Conversations on known and unknown topics.
- Debates of wider interests.
- Field trips to different places.
- Writing compositions on a variety of topics in which the learner is expected to make use of all the vocabulary that he has learned.
- Learning with the help of audio-visual aids like slides, films, and T. V.
- Learning by predicting the meaning with the help of context clues, structural clues, phonetic clues, and word formation clues.

Vocabulary teaching will be effective when it is made a concrete learning activity. For this vocabulary teaching

should not only be integrated with other language skills but also with the learning of other parts of the school curriculum.

a) *Second Language Teaching And Vocabulary Teaching:*

There are three independent aspects of the process of second language teaching. They are approach, method, and technique. Broadly speaking 'approach' includes a set of correlative assumptions dealing with the nature of language and nature of language teaching and learning; method includes 'an overall plan for the orderly presentation of language material,' and 'technique' is implementation that actually takes place in the classroom (Anthony 1972). All the three are inter-related because whatever the method, it employs certain language teaching material with certain assumptions about language, and is implemented in the classroom on the basis of the assumptions about language teaching and language learning. So, here, while dealing with vocabulary teaching, all the three aspects of vocabulary teaching mentioned above are taken into account.

b) *Grammar Translation Method:*

The grammar translation method adopts the teaching of grammar of L2 (Second language) using the L1 (First language), and translation of texts from L2 to L1 and rarely from L1 to L2 as the mode to teach L2. This is said to be the earliest method in the history of language teaching. This method has been in use for a long time and had several names to it. As the name of the method itself suggests, the teaching material following this mode of teaching would normally consist of chapters depicting various grammatical categories, and translation texts. The vocabulary of L1 would be used in these lessons of grammar to explain the particular grammar rule, and also to explain the application of the rule with some more vocabulary items to elucidate the grammatical point mentioned. At the same time, in appropriate cases, vocabulary items are listed in the teaching material presented to the learner in the class as exceptions to the rule described. Here the vocabulary gradation and vocabulary presentation for the teaching material and in the practical teaching and learning in the classroom context are mainly based on the affiliation of the vocabulary item to the particular grammatical category. Apart from this, vocabulary is taught out of context and in isolation. Normally a bulk of vocabulary items belonging to a particular grammatical category would be presented en bloc to the student. The future enrichment of the learner's vocabulary would depend upon his interest and the follow-up measure he undertakes.

The translation exercise that is being conducted in this method would consist of sentences or passages based on the grammatical category taught in that stage of learning. It may also be an arbitrarily selected passage. In the first case, the vocabulary that is used to elucidate the grammar would find place and sometimes other vocabulary may also creep in. In the second case, the vocabulary would depend on the arbitrarily selected passage, whether it is familiar or not to the learner. The vocabulary is taught by associating it with the meaning in the mother tongue of the learner. Normally exact semantic equivalents or partially semantic equivalents

are given. A formal or informal bilingual dictionary is a common aid in this method to teach the vocabulary.

In some cases, the vocabulary used would be given at the end of the chapter along with the meaning with a supplementary list of vocabulary items that can be memorized in the context of that lesson. Many times the vocabulary learned would be confined to literary domain and some would be obsolete even. Here vocabulary learning is equated almost to learning a list of vocabulary items.

c) *Direct Method:*

The direct method, which is in practice in many countries with variations locally designed, is based on certain teaching techniques developed by a French scholar M. Gouin in 1860. This method is based on the principle that a second language can be learned easily if it is learned like the child's learning of his mother tongue, where the child is assumed to learn the words and grammatical forms of his mother tongue through the constant repetition and by linking them directly to the life's real objects and actions. So, the learner, learning a target language by this method should learn the vocabulary of the target language by associating them directly with the objects or actions without any media like translation. The process thus started by associating a word with the thing would be extended for associating the thing with the context and the context would be associated with an expression in the target language.

This method gives prime importance to the selection, gradation, and presentation of vocabulary of the target language. The vocabulary selection for the course material is made (a) on the basis of the frequency of vocabulary items in the language, i.e., with the help of frequency counts of vocabulary items, (b) from the day to day conversations and experiences, (c) potentiality of vocabulary item for easy visualization, picturization with an aid for action in the classroom, and (d) selecting the words that have only one meaning and by avoiding multi meaning vocabulary items. These are the general criteria that are borne in mind while selecting the vocabulary for course materials.

The vocabulary so selected is graded in a way that the easily visualizable item would be presented first. The vocabulary items that (a) need an explanation in the target language, and (b) are to be acquired by deducing the meaning in the linguistic or social context, i.e., vocabulary that cannot be acquired and taught in the way said above, would be taken in the later stages of learning only, when the learner has sufficient competence for the purpose.

The vocabulary item thus selected and graded are presented in the classroom with the help of visual aids and objects present in the classroom because the words presented refer to the immediate experience of the learner. The process of associating the vocabulary to meaning is achieved through gestures and actions, so to say through dramatization. While the concrete meaning is acquired through the association of the vocabulary with object and action, the abstract meaning is taught through the association of vocabulary to idea. Translation of words of any sort is completely abandoned. When the students have mastered the target language adequately, the target language so far learned will be used to explain the new items and meanings of new items. This is in the initial stage of

learning. In the later stages still more abstract vocabulary also would be presented and in this case the learner would be explained to such vocabulary either in the linguistic or social context so that the learner could be made to deduce the meaning on his own with the help of the context. Whatever the new vocabulary is presented it would be presented in such a way that it is an integral ingredient of the real life's context and not an obsolete or of literal value. The consecutive repetition and reinforcement of the vocabulary thus presented makes the learner retain them in their use for sufficiently long time and helps in easy recall also. Since this method gives more importance to the spoken form of the vocabulary items than to their written representations, the presentation of written forms would be delayed for sufficient time. Even when the written form of word is presented the learner would be made to concur the meaning directly from the written form without the help of translation. In this method vocabulary learning is not equated with learning a list of words but the vocabulary learning takes place in the context in which the items being learnt would be used.

d) *Audio-Lingual Method:*

The audio-lingual method assumes that (a) language is primarily aural-oral and the reading and writing are secondary, (b) language is a set of patterns and so patterns can be acquired easily by constant repetition and reinforce, and also through analogy, and that (c) the native language interferes where there is difference in the patterns of source language and target language. Superficial similarities will also be a hindrance. So while teaching' vocabulary the focus is more upon the aural-oral form of vocabulary than upon the written form.

The criteria that are followed by this method to select vocabulary resemble in a way the direct method because this method also relies upon the frequency counts. The basic vocabulary of the language would get prime importance in preparing the learning material. Some other vocabulary items though not basic but are essential for the efficient teaching and effective communication and for purpose for which the learning is done will be included.

Many courses of this method in the initial stage would contain a near total of 750 to 1500 vocabulary items as basic for learning. This method exercises a strict vocabulary control. In initial stages the vocabulary learning is limited to essential vocabulary items that are quite necessary and just enough to present the language pattern. The vocabulary input would be slowly increased only when the learner has acquired sufficient number of structures and sufficient training to manipulate the language structures. Language learning emphasizes acquisition of structures more than the acquisition of vocabulary; both are parallel activities, with the former occupying a more important role.

This method adopts almost all the procedures followed in the direct method. There is a reluctance to use the source language but this method does not abandon the use of source language in explaining the meaning of target language words, if necessary, and if the learner fails to deduce the meaning from the structural and social contexts. But all the attempts would be made to elicit the meaning from the learner in the context. Normally total number of vocabulary items introduced in one lesson does not exceed

30 at a time. The new items may not find place in the drills or exercises of these lessons because these are meant only to practice the pattern and the new item may hinder the progress.

The substantial amount of graded as well as ungraded reading material provided after the learning of basic vocabulary in the basic structures will enrich the vocabulary of the learner both qualitatively and quantitatively.

e) *Cognate Method:*

The cognate method is used to teach languages in cases where both the source and target languages are genetically related. This method is adopted sometime even to teach the languages where the source and target languages belong to different genetic roots but share certain language features due to linguistic and non-linguistic reasons. This method, while doing so, tries to exploit the cognateness in terms of phonology, morphology, syntax and lexicon of both the languages.

The vocabulary selection, gradation and presentation in the method are completely governed by the cognate relationship existing between the chosen words. While selecting the cognates certain items (pseudo-cognates) would be completely eliminated because these homophonous forms with distinct meaning in the languages create problems in learning rather than facilitating learning. The rules are identified for phonology, morphology, syntax and lexicon of both the source language and the target language and these rules are graded from known to unknown. So, theoretically speaking, the vocabulary items with the identical shape and meaning in both source and target language would come first and others follow later. Since this method does not keep each of the language skills apart, all the four language skills proceed hand in hand, so, there is no question of introducing the spoken form of the word first and then introducing the written form. Note, however, that such a separation and sequential organization is possible.

Practically speaking, it is evident from the guiding principle of that method that meaning learning does not pose great problem because in selection and in gradation of vocabulary items similarity in form and function is given importance. When vocabulary items are cognate, not because of genetic relation but because of borrowing by the source and target languages from a third source are presented in the material, these would be preceded or followed by the conversion rules. When it becomes difficult for the learner to learn the meaning, the meaning will be explained to him in either the target or the source language. First the cognate vocabulary is presented to the learner in the structures that are governed by the identical rules in source and target languages and then in the structures that are governed by the rules that are specific to the target language. The vocabulary used in the lessons would be listed at the end of each lesson under different grammatical categories.

f) *Bilingual Method:*

Bilingual method of language teaching aims at making the learner fluent and accurate: (a) in spoken word, (b) in written word, and (c) in making him a true bilingual (Dodson 1974). Dodson makes a distinction between the

spoken word and the written word, while stating the objectives of the method. While the direct method intends to teach only spoken word by abandoning the written word, the bilingual method gives appropriated and due weight to both forms of the word. This method tries to achieve the fluency through the eight consecutive steps: They are:

- Imitation.
- Interpretation.
- Substitution and extension.
- Independent speaking of sentences.
- Reverse interpretations.
- Consolidation of question patterns.
- Questions and answers.
- Normal foreign language conversation.

According to Dodson, the teaching material need not be specifically prepared for this method, but the material that easily facilitates the adoption of this method can be selected from the material that would be available for teaching a language as second language. However, he suggested that vocabulary graded according to the frequency should be made use of in cases where graded vocabulary lists are available. In the situations in which such graded vocabulary lists are not available the teacher is advised to select from the vocabulary lists intended for other languages and with the help of his 'commonsense' he can make a list of the items that he finds and feels more frequent and 'sprung' naturally from the situation.

In the first stage, thus, selected vocabulary would be presented in the classroom in the situation-bound and visual-presented series of sequential pictures in the context of structures for imitation. This method prefers less number of structures at a time and to present a few vocabulary items at a time because the learning of a large number of words does hamper the learning of the language and slow down the fluency. Since there is constant revision of the elements of the language taught, it is enough to concentrate on a few new vocabulary items and a few structures for mastery at a time. First, the vocabulary that have one to one correspondence in both the languages would be taken for teaching, but this principle does not abandon the teaching of vocabulary items that can be easily demonstrated to the learner with the help of visuals in the initial stages of teaching itself. Teaching of vocabulary that are integrated with certain foreign cultural aspect and that are not known to the learner should be withheld. Especially teaching of words with different shades of meaning in both languages also will be withheld.

The presentation of the new vocabulary along with the old vocabulary to the learner will be done in a wide range of contexts so as to provide a wide range of contexts of usage. By presenting the vocabulary in that way in classroom and in the teaching material, the teacher would be preparing the student to use them in innumerable sentences and in various situations along with capability for manipulation in the needed manner.

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