



Resources and Strategies for Teaching English Vocabulary in the Primary and Junior Secondary Schools in Nigeria

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Abstract. In any typical English as a second language (ESL) classroom, teachers are faced with a huge problem of making students use the target language. This is because learning a second language (L2) is a long and complex undertaking. The learner's whole person is affected as he struggles to read beyond the confines of his first language and integrates himself into a new language, a new culture, a way of thinking, feeling, and acting. Vocabulary is core in language learning. When learners increase their vocabulary size, their use of language skills implicitly increases as their knowledge of the word also becomes broader. Effective vocabulary instruction involves understanding the new idea in the context of understanding or solving current social problems of the world and learners are given opportunities to use the new words when reading, writing, and speaking. Students would be able to building relational understandings and purposefully make connections to personal background knowledge and experience. To achieve these, teachers need to employ relevant and effective strategies and resources in the classroom, this paper therefore exposed some of these strategies and instructional materials that could be useful in ESL class.

Keywords: Teaching, Learning, Strategies, Instructional Materials, Vocabulary

1. Introduction

Teaching a second language involves total commitment, total involvement and deep pedagogical expertise to enable the learners to successfully send and receive messages in a second language. Very few people achieve fluency in L2 within the confines of the classroom. Some intricate webs of variables that are spun together determine why one learns or fails to learn a second language. These include teachers' understanding of the principle of language learning and teaching, and knowing current issues in L2 learning. Some of the current issues revolve around answers to pertinent questions on who, how, when, where and why:

Who does the teaching and learning? I.e. what background do teacher and student have?

How? I.e. how does the teacher ensure success in L2 classroom? In other words, what are the strategies employed?

When (i.e. at what age) does one learn L2 easily and for how long?

Where is the learning taking place? The "where" of the learning is important because the socio-political condition of a particular country can affect the outcome of learning, (i.e. mastery of the language).

Why does the learner attempt to learn L2? Put more explicitly what are the affective,

emotional, personal or intellectual reasons behind learning L2?

Providing answers to these fundamental questions will help language teacher to have a total and integrated understanding of many areas of the process of L2 learning. This, in turn, will help in making L2 classroom successful.

2. Teaching and Learning Activities

The choice of learning activities and creative use of teaching and learning materials depend largely on the teaching methods adopted, which are also dependent on the selected approach. Richard and Rodgers (1986) describe method to include:

Approach: - This is a theory of the nature of language, i.e., an account of the nature of language proficiency and basic unit of language structure. It relates to the nature of language learning which involves an account of the psycholinguistic and cognitive process involved in language learning and an account of the conditions that allow for successful use of these processes.

Design:- This can be seen from six perspectives: (a) the general and specific objectives of the method, (b) a syllabus model (i.e. criteria for the selection and organization of linguistic and/or subject matter content, (c) types of learning and teaching activities (i.e. kinds of tasks and practice activities to be employed in the classroom and in materials.(d) Learners' role, i.e. types of learning task set for learners, degree of control learners have over the content of learning, pattern, of learner groupings that are recommended, the view of the learner as a processor performer, initiator, problem solver, etc. (e) teacher's roles i.e. type of functions teachers fulfill, degree of teacher's influence over learning, degree to which the teacher determines the content of learning, types of interaction between teachers and learners (f) the role of instructional materials, primary function of instructional materials, the form materials take (e.g. audiovisual, textbook etc.), relation of materials to other input, assumptions made about teachers and learners.

Procedure involves classroom techniques, practices and behaviors observed when the

method is used, resources in terms of time, space, and equipment used by the lecturers and learners when any method is been used.

In a typical classroom, where English is a second language, it is a known fact that children learn best when they enable them to take part in any activity using the target language. Pupil should however, not be debarred from the natural use of L1 during classroom activities. It is very difficult indeed for primary school age language learners to think about abstract situations in the language classroom and they need immediate and visible activities to support their learning with the guidance and mentoring of their teacher.

There should be pupil communication exposure to the target language and interaction in the language session, and a balance between teacher telling time and students talking time. Oracy and literacy in the target language are emphasized at the primary and the secondary school levels as they are important aspect of mother tongue development.

It is also imperative to establish a clear link between the pupil's life and his interest, so that he can see how relevant the target language could be. Teachers have to take care of language class environment and strive to take account of student's needs. As noticed by Finney (2002), learner and learning-centered approach to teaching languages to young learners is the most sensible way. The implications of this is selecting the appropriate instructional materials and adapting these materials to suit the age and background of the learner and to suit the methodology.

In learning English language, the acquisition of relevant and adequate number of words is fundamental. The core of a language involves the sound system, the syntactic structure and the vocabulary {Unoh 1987}. But of prime importance among these is the vocabulary {Kruse 1929 as cited in Adeniyi 2006}. Vocabulary can be defined as *the words of a language, including single items and phrases or chunks of several words which convey a particular meaning, the way individual words do*. Vocabulary addresses single lexical items—words with specific meaning(s)—but it also includes lexical phrases or chunks.

Vocabulary is central to English language teaching because without sufficient vocabulary students cannot understand others or express their own ideas. Wilkins (1972) wrote that “. . . while without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary *nothing* can be conveyed”

(pp. 111–112). Lewis (1993) went further to argue, “lexis is the core or heart of language” (p. 89). Particularly as students develop greater fluency and expression in English, it is significant for them to acquire more productive vocabulary knowledge and to develop their own personal vocabulary learning strategies. Students often instinctively recognize the importance of vocabulary to their language learning. As Schmitt (2010) noted, “learners carry around dictionaries and not grammar books” (p. 4). Teaching vocabulary helps students understand and communicate with others in English. learning vocabulary also helps students master English for their purposes. Chall (1987), stahl (1990), Nation (2001), Salah (2008) and chall and stahl (2009) opine that vocabulary knowledge can help the learner to comprehend written texts, just in the same way reading can contribute to vocabulary growth.

3. Features of Vocabulary Teaching

The concept of a *word* can be defined in various ways, but three significant aspects teachers need to be aware of and focus on are *form*, *meaning*, and *use*.

In the teaching of vocabulary, certain criteria are to be taken into consideration. These include but not limited to the following:

Frequency: this is the number of occurrences of a word in the target language. The most frequent words in any language should be taught before the unusual ones as they are likely to be the most useful ones for the learners of that language. However, Renouf (1991) maintained that the most frequent words are not necessarily the most useful ones for the learners and that common sense demands that the most frequent words be supplemented by intuition.

Range: this depicts the extent to which a word occurs in the different types of texts. A word

may be quite frequent or its occurrence might be in just one or two texts. In this case, although its frequency might look significant, its range might be quite small. The most useful words for the learners here are those which are frequent and occur across a wide variety of texts.

Availability and learnability: This involves the extent to which a word can be learned without difficulty. Also, there is need for teachers to teach those items that could be seen around the vicinity of the school and the society of the learners. This involves teaching words such as chair, table, eat, drink, write, fan, stapler, biro, teacher, sweater, jumper, and pullover.

Language needs of learners: this is the extent to which a word is regarded as "required" by the learner in order to communicate. It is possible for the pupil to feel they need or to be interested in different words to those suggested by the teacher or textbook, pupils' interest needs to be taken into consideration as it would serve as motivation for them. The pupils may decide to know the English term of some words or to narrate a story and expect their teachers to correct them.

Cultural Factor: Grain & Redman (1989:59) saw this as the need for a teacher to teach the common traditional words in the society. They thought that teaching such words will reflect the cultural interests of the speakers.

4. Instructional materials/resources, concept and meaning

Instructional materials refer to materials used by a teacher in enhancing the process of teaching and helping the learners to grasp what he (the teacher) intends to communicate to them clearly. Akanbi (1989) agrees that materials introduce pupils to idea and information about a subject in a meaningful and realistic manner. They also enhance the pupils' experiences through such devices as motion pictures, and lead them to discover significant issues, values and concepts.

Adeniyi (2006) views materials as both human and non-human materials employed by teachers to help learners integrate the classroom

experience with the real world experience so as to concretize learning. Abolade (2002) also describes instructional materials as different forms of information carriers, which are used to record, store, preserve, transmit or retrieve information for the purpose of teaching and learning.

Azikwe (1998) asserts that instructional materials cover whatever the teachers uses to involve all the six senses of sight, hear, touch, smell, movement and taste while presenting his lessons. Instructional materials are very important in language teaching, especially the second language, because they facilitate the ultimate association between sound and their symbols and also words and the object they represent. The use of instructional materials reduces the problems of interferences and translation. Hoban (1949) as cited in Azikwe (1998) outlined the values of instructional aids as follow: They

- Supply a concrete basis for conceptual thinking and reduce meaningless word responses from pupils.
- Make learning more permanent
- Provide a high degree of interest for pupils
- Offer a reality of experience which stimulates self-activity on the part of the pupils.
- Develop a continuity of thought (especially motion pictures).
- Contribute to growth of meaning and hence to vocabulary development.
- Provide experiences not easily obtained through other materials and contribute to the efficiency, in depth and variety of learning.

Bamishaye (2008) identified five main purposes of instructional materials which apply to any subject field. These are:

- To teach skill and present fact with appropriate materials
- To organize knowledge into concept through the use of instructional materials.
- To stimulate their imagination and
- To develop attitudes or to change existing ones.

The above listed purposes cover the three major domains of instructional objectives – cognitive, affective and psychomotor. In as much as a teacher would want to deliver his level of effectiveness along these domains, it is equally important that the teacher plans on what would enhance his professional effectiveness before going to class. He does this by carefully choosing the mean and the channel for his communication together with possible activities that students will be engaged upon.

The teaching profession is daily facing new challenges because of the new trend of development in the society; thus, there is need to move ahead of the old method of teaching. It is also essential to embrace the use of instructional materials to achieve the stated objectives. This implies that a thorough reorientation is sine qua non for the teaching profession. A combination of instructional materials that appeal to all senses is likely to make a deeper impression on the learners than the conventional method of chalkboard and verbal dissemination.

Instructional materials can be grouped under three broad types namely – visual, audio, and audio-visual.

Visual Aids: These are instructional materials and devices that appeal to the sense of sight and touch as well as taste, movement and sense of smell. They consist of non-projected aids, the chart board and adhesives, pictorial aids like charts, pictures, mobile, three dimensional aids, projected aids, laboratory equipment, chemical apparatus and radio. Gain and Redman (2006) as cited in Adeniyi and Lawal (2016) assert that these teaching aids can be used to group items into concrete vocabulary lessons and for presentation, practice, revision and testing. The essence of any communication activities is the transmission of visual intended to evoke meaning in the mind of the recipient, thereby, increasing communication accurately. Hence, the device is to serve as a more concrete experience to meaning than the spoken or written words, which could inhibit meaning through language and cultural differences that exist between the learners and speakers (Heinch, Molendas & Russell 2000). Words are arbitrary

symbols, which do not look or sound like what they represent. Students need to be taught the skills of visual literacy to enable them elicit messages correctly and use them to their educational advantage. It is assumed that when a concrete representation is present, the likelihood of a successful communication is increased.

Duyer (1978) has presented a research evidence which revealed that showed that representation could actually interfere with the communication and learning process. He states that the ability to sort out the relevant from the irrelevant in a technical representation grows with age and experience. Therefore, instead of enhancing the deficiency in communication, the wealth of details sound in a realistic visual may increase the likelihood of the learners (between the age bracket of 13-15) being distracted by irrelevant elements of the visual which involves differentiation, Identifying, analyzing and integrating, drawing interferences and creating new conceptualization from what have been learned.

Azikwe (1998), stressing the importance of visual aids in English language, asserts that language teaching is made very effective when the language teacher complements verbal explanation with visual aids. Visual aids attract and arrest the attention of students, especially those who have difficulty in learning L2. A lesson is made more interesting when appropriate visual aids are used. Also, the use of visual aids enhance retention of information on the part of the learner because it is easy to forget what is heard, but not when learning by hearing is further reinforced by the use of additional sensory experience of seeing. The use of visual aids enables the learner to form correct images. Without the additional experience through the sight, it is possible for member of a class to form differing ideas and images about something they learn through verbal description only.

Audio- Aids: Audio-aids cover all recorded materials in vinyl tapes that can be played back, using the recorder or radio during a lesson. These types of aids appeal to the sense of hearing alone. They are very useful to the language teacher for the teaching of the listening

skills. Audio aids in general are needed by all teachers of English. Since L2 is better learned through imitating the native speakers, the tapes and records prepared by the native speakers will enhance the teachers' efforts in the second language context. Azikwe (1998) also asserts that audio aids are provided to make the teacher's work less cumbersome and also to make teaching/learning situation a fun. They are very effective in teaching the language skills, e.g., grammar, pronunciation and dictation. The students' activities could be recorded after listening to the tape as their performances could be played back for them to hear, identify their weak points and make corrections. Audio aids are easy to operate since they do not require electricity and are portable and fairly light to carry about. The teacher has control over the audio aids because the playing could be stopped where and when necessary to give room for explanation and clarifications of points to the class. Audio instructional devices have limitations. Without some monitoring over their students, some students do not pay attention to the presentation of audio materials. Storage and retrieval of audio tapes phonograph records can also cause problems.

Audio-visual aids – The instructional aid grouped as audio-visual are films, transparencies, slides and filmstrips and television/video tapes. All these aids with the exception of television/video tapes make use of projectors, hence they are known as projector aids as against visual aids which make up the non-projected aids. The projected aids require the use of electricity and they appeal to both the senses of sight and hearing. The audio-visual aids are made up of soft and hard-wares. The soft-ware are such materials as transparencies films, slides and film strips, while the hard-ware are the equipment or the over-head projectors useful in showing the materials on the screen. Audio visuals could be made locally to develop writing and speaking skills. Teacher could also have record to audio visual aids in teaching grammar and vocabulary.

In teaching meaning from the context, Sarka (1978) asserts that the use of visual and audio visual aids is very important. In his study to find out the effect of visual aids on students'

understanding of a passage, he divided a group of students into two. One was given a bare outline of a story and no pictures. The other group was given a set of pictures and real object with some explanations. It was found that the group with the picture and real object performed better. These materials spark off latent ideas – ideas that were already there in students' mind but needed an incentive to start the flow of thought. Selected multisensory materials could encourage students to put their feelings and thought into word in a more vivid and lucid manner, which is after all what vocabulary acquisition and good writing is all about.

Singleton (1999) observed that as far as meaning is concerned, the availability of a mental images emerge as a possible aids in the fixing of words in meaning. Teacher can put the knowledge of these findings to good effect by encouraging the use of visual aids that brings real concept to the students.

5. To what extent do audio visual aids enable learners to grasp the meaning of the new vocabulary?

Dove and pai (2006) compared the learning and retention of L2 vocabulary through listening to scripted dialogue in two conditions: audio and video, with each condition having its control group.

Students were studying French as L2 at university and were at high-elementary level. There were vocabulary gains for both groups, especially the video-group. Strategies differed according to the presence or otherwise of visual accompaniment. With video, less attention seemed to be paid to purely linguistic cues, e.g., cognates, which facilitated the interference of words that may or may not have been central to the meaning of the passage. Support was found for the view that media-use helps develop lexical competency where L1 & L2 words are related, where the subject of a text is not unfamiliar and where the visual content and the text correspond. In conclusion, instructional materials are essential to the achievement of learning

objectives. They provide the basic information required and considered important but which is not contained in the prescribed textbooks. They also encourage and produced self-instruction learning and adequate presentation of lessons.

Realias: The term 'realias' stand for real objects, such as coins, nuts; artifacts, plant, animals etc. They are not always thought of as visuals, since the term visual implies representation of categories including some of the most accessible in highlighting and involving materials in educational use. Bullough (1990) observes that realias are instrumental in stimulating the Imagination and have direct purposeful experience, and as such, they are real media for introducing learners to a new subject. Used as part of concept learning, they supply flesh-and-blood mental images. In a nut shell, it can be observed that realias facilitate teaching for the teacher just as it enhances understanding of vocabulary items, ideas or relationship, even in the teaching of the mother tongue and the L2.

Finally, it is pertinent to add here that the combination of all the instructional materials discussed above (i.e. visual and audio-visual aids, and realias) is what is packaged in this work to be Multisensory Instructional Approaches. In other words, this approach involves the use of video-tape, tape recorder and real objects (realias) which appeal to different senses, like sight, hearing, gustatory, touch and smell to teach vocabulary items to the underachievers.

In Multisensory Approach, more than two senses are elicited at the same time in the process of learning a new language. The senses are those of seeing, hearing, and feeling. Thus, Stone (2008) concluded that it seems reasonable to suppose that learning which involves several senses may well be more effective than an appeal to the ear only in language learning.

RESOURCES AND MATERIALS THAT CAN BE CREATIVELY USED IN THE LANGUAGE CLASS FOR PRIMARY AND SECONDARY LEARNERS

Below is a list of materials and a resume of their possible positive uses Blackboard

Can be used for a number of activities:

- List of vocabulary items
- Writing new language
- Brainstorming words for new topics/ recycled topic
- Games In two teams with board split into halves
- For keeping score
- For drawing pictures (e.g. group/individual picture dictation)
- Drawing pictures to illustrate a story
- For putting flashcards on
 - In lexical groups
 - In colour groups
 - In spelling groups
 - As part of a game
 - As illustration for activity
- Games
 - Clothes designer's dictation
 - Describe the suspect dictation

Pencils

- Puppets
- Counters

Flashcards (with words, pictures of both)

Can be used for a huge variety of activities:

Games

Snap

Find one of these

What's missing?

Language focus:

- Introducing/remembering vocabulary
- Introducing verbs – verb games
- Word order in sentences
- Punctuation revision
- Introducing/remembering adjectives
- Introducing/remembering prepositions
- Lexical sets-town/school/classroom/farm/vehicles/the
- Market/hospital/furniture/food/hobbies/jobs.
- Topic sets- the environment/shopping/buildings and design/farming and
- Agriculture/the seas and oceans.

Cue cards (words, pictures or both)

Can be used for:

- Cue cards role play
- Creating stories

Stories (oral, cue cards, books)

Can be used to:

- Set the scene before an activity, such as role play
- Contextualize the language
- To ask what happens next.....
- To join in with.....
- Story board writing stages of the story: the beginning; the problem; the solution and the end.

Cardboard Box/es

Can be used for:

- TV screen for interviews/story presentation/how to/etc.

Maps

Can be used for:

- Information gap games and activities
- Role play 'could you tell where..... Is, please?

Friezes

Can be used for:

- 'I spy' games
- Answering question such as 'What colour can you see?'
- 'Find a..... 'Find example of a.....'

Posters

Can be used for:

- Games like 'I spy'
- What colour/words beginning with 'X' can you see?
- What professions/ what vehicles/ what building can you find?
- What's the weather like?

<p>Can you see.....??</p> <p>Magazine and newspaper pictures/text/cutting/adverts Can be used for: Jigsaw readings Group work Describing..... Half headlines..... How does the article finish.... Interview models</p> <p>Labels Can be used: Around the classroom For any diagrams/pictures on the wall To accompany illustration on the wall</p> <p>Food packets Can be used for: For display Linked to particular topics e.g. countries, colour, weight, healthy/ Unhealthy eating, environment, etc.</p> <p>Media e.g. computers, radios, television etc. Can be used as model to create: Role-play for radio Games such as 'Twenty questions' 'What do I do?' 'Call my buff' Story-telling Sound effects Interviews with imaginary famous sports people/artists/musicians</p> <p>Culture e.g. games, art and craft, dance, music and songs, drama role play and puppet. Can be used to teach vocabulary and the four language skills i.e. listening, speaking, Reading and writing skills.</p> <p>Props Can be used for: Hats- for different people in a story Bags- what's in the bags? Game/shopping in the market role-play Food packets- shopping Menus- in the restaurant role play</p> <p>Mobile phones and technology links Can be used for: Creating texts..... Sending messages Sending music Using it for calculations/diary/alarm</p> <p>People in the community as a resource Can be used for: Stories for history, language and geographical knowledge.</p>
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6. Strategies to Support English Language Learners in ESL classroom

Teaching strategies are different activities that teachers engage in to improve their classroom practices with the aim of supporting students to learn maximally.

The following strategies can be considered in teaching English vocabulary in ESL class:

- Teacher/student talk time: teacher needs to speak slowly and clearly, and provide students with enough time to formulate their responses, whether in speaking or in writing since L2 learners are thinking and producing in two or more

languages. After asking a question, the teacher needs to wait for a few seconds before calling on someone to respond. This process provides all students with an opportunity to think and process, and gives learners a needed period to formulate a response.

- Use of Non-Linguistic Cues: teachers should use visuals, sketches, gestures, intonation, and other non-verbal cues to present the lexical items to students. Teaching with visual representations of concepts can be hugely helpful to the learners.
- Teachers should involve the learners in practical activities through the use of

- authentic lexical items and never rely wholly on a textbook as their visual aid
- On giving instructions, teachers should give verbal and written instructions—this practice can help all learners, especially L2s. Teachers must not act surprised if students are lost when they haven't clearly written and explained step-by-step directions.
 - On Checking for learners Understanding, Teachers should regularly check that students are understanding the lesson. After an explanation or lesson, a teacher could say, "Please put thumbs up, thumbs down, or sideways to let me know if this is clear, and it's perfectly fine if you don't understand or are unsure—I just need to know." This last phrase is essential if you want students to respond honestly. Teachers can also have students quickly answer on a Post-it note that they place on their desks. The teacher can then quickly circulate to check responses. When teachers regularly check for understanding in the classroom, students become increasingly aware of monitoring their own understanding, which serves as a model of good study skills. It also helps ensure that students are learning, thinking, understanding, comprehending, and processing at high levels. Teachers must not also simply ask, "Are there any questions?" This is not an effective way to gauge what all your students are thinking. Waiting until the end of class to see what learners write in their note is not going to provide timely feedback. Also, they should not assume that students are understanding because they are smiling and nodding their heads—sometimes they're just being polite.
 - Encouraging learners to develop the use of their Home Language is also important. Second language learners need to continually build their literacy skills in their home language, also known as L1. Research has found that learning to read in the home language promotes reading achievement in the

second language as "transfer" occurs. This transfer may include phonological awareness, comprehension skills, and background knowledge in the process of vocabulary learning. Students should not be stopped from using their native language in the classroom. Forbidding students to use their primary languages does not promote a positive learning environment where students feel safe to take risks and make mistakes. This practice can be harmful to the relationships between teachers and students, especially if teachers act more like language police than language coaches. However, while the research on transfer of L1 skills to L2 cannot be denied, it doesn't mean that teachers should not encourage the use of English in class and outside of the classroom.

Hilliker (2012) also suggested the following strategies to help second language learners: Teachers should:

- Speak slower, not louder.
- Provide outlines, advanced organizer, or visual guides.
- Write down key terms on the board.
- Integrate games.
- Read written instructions. Repeat.
- Write key concept vocabulary on a Word Wall.
- Integrate listening centers.
- Model new skills.
- Extend test time.
- Don't rescue L2s when they struggle to speak
- smile, relax your feet, face, and hands, and wait (it's hard to be tense when those body parts are loose).
- Think-pair-share.
- Provide exemplars of successful projects.
- Let students use their home language in the classroom to solve work.
- Use pictures, sketches, and graphic organizers.
- Make videos of presentations for L2 learners to replay if needed.
- Liberally use checks for understanding.

- Pair up ELLs with strong oral and written English skills.
- Share a picture glossary.
- Teach with cooperative learning.

All these will help second language learners to adequately cope in the class

7. Concluding Remarks

Language learning involves learning about a new way of thinking, feeling, and acting and having considered the centrality of vocabulary to the teaching of language, there is therefore, need for total commitment, total involvement, and total physical, intellectual and emotional response. Language teaching strategies and materials design can affect the teaching process in the language classroom. If the materials and the strategies employed are not designed in conformity with the age, interest, level and needs of the learners, they may not be effective. Children generally (both in primary and secondary schools) learn best when the teacher uses materials and strategies that enable them to take part in an activity using the target language. Besides, they need to be more 'scaffolded' by the teacher. There should be an even balance between fluency and accuracy in each vocabulary lesson and teachers are enjoined to take account of students' learning needs. Finally, teacher should make their own materials and adapt them to suit the individual needs of the learners as well as employing strategies that are learner centered.

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