# Weakness of Vocabulary Teaching Strategies in Modern Classes

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**Abstract**
There have been growing concerns over several weaknesses faced in teaching and learning vocabulary. One of these weaknesses is the weakness of vocabulary teaching strategies. Many scholars and educators have felt the impact of this weakness all through their careers to an extent of giving, or failing to know which trend or strategy to employ. Several studies have been made in order to find out why there is a weakness in vocabulary teaching strategies and to meet the growing demand to solve this issue. There is a growing influence of Vocabulary being more than the word used to the context in which it is used. This article's main focus is to discuss the weakness of vocabulary teaching in modern classes as well as all issues that rotate around this subject. It explores issues like; the complexity of teaching vocabulary (task size), differences between written and spoken vocabulary, and limited word sources like dictionaries and issues like word parts and context, as well as the failure to embrace diversity. It also gives several recommendations to effective teaching of vocabulary in modern classes.
**Keywords:** vocabulary teaching, teaching strategies, modern classes, weaknesses of teaching

## 1. Introduction

Learning vocabulary through the use of different strategies is important in learning any language (Fadel2012). When a person learns or gets to know more words, he or she gets involved positively in the sharing of information due to the ability to know what is to be said and heard, or through reading and writing. The understanding of more words used in a given language helps a person to positively understand how and when they are used. Vocabulary can be subdivided into two main types: Passive and active vocabulary.

Passive vocabulary refers to words that cannot be effectively used or remembered by a person while speaking or writing but can be understood by the same person when listening or reading while Active vocabulary refers to words that can be effectively employed or used by a person in communication like speaking, writing, reading and listening.

Stedman (2015), states that more than a dictionary is needed for a learner to grasp good vocabulary in both spoken and written language through being taught. There is a lot of educational commitment required to overcome the size of such a task (limited number of words to be learnt by students), knowing the differences that exist between the written and spoken language, information sources' limitation like for cases of language dictionaries, as well as word knowledge complexity where low-level memorization is never enough. There are also other things one needs to understand before asserting that he or she has fully understood vocabulary used in a language like any native speaker. An example of these is word spellings, word pronunciation, inflection (the way it is twisted in case it is an adjective, noun, or verb), and collocations with other words (other words mostly used with certain words. There are different special problems faced in teaching vocabulary in modern classes like the weakness of vocabulary teaching strategies and other issues like plays, idiomatic usage of words, false cognates, distinctive homophones, etc. that are important in teaching and learning language vocabulary (Stedman2015).

In most cases, teaching and learning vocabulary appears, to some people, as an easy thing to do in getting new language concepts yet, it is actually one of the hardest things one can do, especially at a certain age (Pérez-Milans 2013). Both teaching and learning vocabulary require constant practice and time, conditions which are hard to fulfill today due to lack of sufficient time. One of the conflicts arising from the use of different vocabulary teaching techniques is the decision on which the words are worth teaching and learning mostly in modern classes (AAC&U2015). Some languages like English are made up of more words than others which make it hard for an individual to know all its vocabulary (Stollhans & Sascha2016). New words are usually met by native speakers who confess to not coming across them before in any text or speech. The organization of vocabulary as a teaching technique also proves another weakness in teaching vocabulary in modern classes. Most people find it easy and useful to ensure organized vocabulary learning sets written down well for the difference in their relations with other words and discovery to be easily spotted.

In order for students to effectively develop strong reading abilities for different vocabulary, they need to concentrate on working with more than a dictionary (Bellanca2014). This will help them in acquiring new word knowledge and strategies through instruction as a teaching technique aimed at increasing their vocabulary knowledge for some good time. According to Stedman, (2015) four fundamental obstacles have to be looked at while helping students in developing their word knowledge broadly and deeply before developing other techniques to address them.

## 2. Task Size

Over time, there has been a confused debate on how many, and which words are necessary for all modern class students to learn in order to graduate into skilled readers who can learn different words by the stated thousands (Keuleers et al., 2016). When there are no distractions or interventions in the teaching modern class vocabulary, widening the vocabulary gap between less and more skilled scholars becomes inevitable. Though many words are added to student vocabularies each year, they are confused for others in most cases and hence used poorly. Keuleers et al., (2016), further state that the learning rate of six to eight words daily come to them as a hard task to achieve. Students in the same classroom usually hold variations in the number of words known to them yet they learn from same cases. To teachers, it is perfectly clear that students with wider vocabulary knowledge are always able to get issues in their heads more easily than those with limited vocabulary knowledge (Bellanca2014).

According to Bellanca (2014), word knowledge levels start being developed in early years of humans as children. This is mainly attributed to the word exposure of children by listening and trying to speak different words mostly those commonly used in their homes and communities. While growing up, exposure to different new words dramatically differs within various children hailing from different families from socioeconomic classes. It is clear that professional parent's children are usually exposed to about 50 percent words than those children belonging to parents classified as working class, and uncountable times than children of parents under welfare support programs (Keuleers et al., 2016). This on the other hand does not directly mean that all children or most of the children hailing from humble backgrounds are bound to face the problem of linguistic poverty though it does underscore the advantages of finding more activities for children through things like games that help improve the way languages are developed as well as vocabulary all through childhood from the time one starts school (Bellanca 2014). Children who come from homes that lack the capacity of offering them necessary preparations for a variety of language lessons that help in education can later learn how to master languages in case they get access to well-designed experiences during school days (Stollhans & Sascha2016). This, on the other hand, has an indirect impact on them even in modern classes.

## 3. Difference between Spoken and Written Language

Several vocabulary teaching strategies in modern classes fail to address the differences between spoken and written language (Bellanca 2014). In most cases, expression by using a given language through face-to-face conversations is not as rich in varied vocabulary as written language expression. This is mainly due to most speakers' ability to employ different communication tools (non-verbal cues like voice tone, gestures, and facial expression) in speeches which are usually hard to access for all writers. Friends also sometimes hold shared knowledge while having conversations which in the end helps them enjoy free word usage leading to precise communication due to the ability to communicate without word precision. Statements like "*do you know*" can easily put a strong mark on a given subject making it easily identifiable in a precise and all detailed physical description. It is important to note the importance of listener's feedback in any conversation since it determines the accuracy of communication rather than the ability of one to know all that is being said in the right context (Stollhans & Sascha2016).

When a person is writing, most especially during literate writing sessions, word choice precision stands as the main communication tool (Bellanca 2014). It was established that educated college adults' conversations are averagely low in varied vocabulary richness than almost all children's books' written vocabulary. Most times, television language is also more vocabulary varied than daily communication language though it does in no way match the used language level of children's books.

All the available differences between written and spoken language can cause different problems to most students learning languages, who hold vocabulary difficulties that are sometimes disguised due to their conversational fluency. A case in point is children of immigrants or people who are not natives who in most cases become perfect in daily conversation language in a period less than two years (Jenkins2014). Though their children find it easy, it becomes or proves harder for them to acquire proficiency in literate language usage. In case teachers are kept unaware of the time differences of people in achieving an advanced level of conversational fluency and proficiency in the use of a given language, they might be labeled as individuals with learning or reading disabilities in a conversationally proficient language with a lot of troubles in understanding different written texts (Bellanca 2014).

Literate language learning in most cases proves to be a big issue or problem to students who use a given language (like English) as their first language. It is easy for one to come across rare words being used in a children's storybook yet they are hard for anybody to apply or easily use while conversing with his or her peers daily. It is not worth saying that children get familiar with all the vocabulary they encounter in school and in their textbooks due to the fact that they are native speakers of the language in which these words appear or because they have attained a given level of spoken language proficiency (Bellanca 2014).

## 4. Limited Word Information Resources

Words are usually provided in different information sources to modern class students being taught or learning any language on a personal basis as a strategy in teaching and learning language vocabulary (Bellanca2014). These information sources include dictionaries, context, and word parts.

### 4.1. Dictionaries

Though most language dictionaries use the same features in vocabulary instruction, most students are not guided on what they need to learn using them (Jenkins2014). Traditionally, dictionaries' instructions focus on students studying the words to capture meaning through the use of their defining information in order for them to see how they are used. This only leads to superficial understanding as well as rapid word forgetfulness in students (Bellanca2014). Students in modern classes also find difficulties in interpreting all the information provided as word definition, most especially when they are to use a word in any sentence which is persistent though they sometimes find rewritten user-friendly definitions. This technique is usually declared "pedagogically useless" by most instructors who use it and then examine sentences constructed by students using the defined words.

Some modern class students also find it hard choosing the most appropriate word meanings from most dictionaries in case the words are unknown. Though these words might seem accurate to adults than to children, people at all stages find them difficult to work with since they are too convoluted for anybody to understand (Stollhans & Sascha 2016). "Simplified" school dictionary and glossary definitions most times fail to offer the best descriptions of what words mean.

It is hard for modern class students to claim knowing some words fully (Jenkins2014). Some who know the definitions of certain words lack the ability to effectively use the same words in sentence construction, and in speech or understanding any sentence using the word. People have the ability to see or realize the words' appearances in sentences like at, for, the, and to but few of them are able to formally define them when asked (Stollhans & Sascha2016). Definitions are just ways people talk about meanings of words but are usually different from what words mean.

### 4.2 Word Parts

Modern students find it hard to work with some word parts like prefixes, roots, and suffixes which affects their growth of vocabulary. Word parts are not all that reliable as sources of information meanings (AAC&U2015). There are different words which seem the same since they share similarities but are literary different like awe and awful, casual and casualty, emerge and emergency, sign and design, as well as sign and resign. These words often confuse students into failing to know word meanings, or mistaking them to mean others.

### 4.3 Context

A great understanding of vocabulary is expected to be acquired by students through the selection of different word meanings in different contexts while reading different challenging texts appropriately (Keuleers et al., 2016). Benefits accrued from context revision and understanding are realized after a long period since it is not possible for one to accumulate a lot of information about all words quickly since they are usually encountered rapidly. Some content words are used infrequently as synonyms for certain words which are already known like abattoir for a slaughterhouse, longevous for long-lived, and paronomasia for a pun. These same words may, on the other hand, be a representation of different meaning shades from their own synonyms, but knowing their meaning from a frequently used synonym makes most readers face difficulties in understanding any text made up of less-used words (AAC&U2015). In most cases, new concepts, idea organizations, and experiences are represented by content words rather than new terms. A case in point is concepts such as algorithm and photosynthesis which require being studied as mathematical and biological. On the other hand, it is not easy for one to learn a given word if he or she has limited encounters with it. The use of context, dictionary definitions, and word parts usually requires word awareness and flexibility in one's thinking (Cuban2015). This sophisticated meta-cognitive and meta-linguistic understanding is not a quality possessed by most students. Most students who need to learn language vocabulary are in most cases the poorest users of the different information sources.

## 5. Failure to Embrace Diversity

According to Stollhans & Sascha (2016), some vocabulary teaching strategies used in teaching modern class students ignore the broad experience and perspective range introduced into schools by culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse students who usually serve as powerful resources for the others to learn vocabulary through different ways, with different people in the same but new environment (Jenkins2014). They fail to know that each person in this diverse world can act as a resource to another hence, limiting students to following certain principals. Instead of ensuring diversity by handling the problem of educators and their students in some countries like the United States, the accepted diversity in modern classrooms encourages and necessitates development and usage of diverse teaching strategies which handle students solely.

Some countries are fortunate enough to be with different immigrants, political refugees, racial descendants, and political refugees from all over the world. This diversity has a great potential of making these countries' classrooms rich through the presented vocabulary exploration opportunities and other language treasures. The adoption of global perspectives helps countries view linguistically diverse students as resources through which many vocabulary teaching and learning opportunities are provided (Jenkins2014). To achieve more from these students, there is a need for a greater approach repertoire to teaching and learning vocabulary. There is a need for students and teachers to cultivate different interpersonal skills as well as offer respect to other cultures as demanded by the current world economy through the global view.

## 6. Recommendations

According to Riddell & Roger (2014), modern school Vocabulary teachers need to hold high expectations for their students since it boosts their problem identification, involvement in activities requiring collaboration and accelerates their learning due to the love for teachers who challenge them hence learning more. High expectations from language teachers show how much students are believed in to attain success in learning new vocabulary (AAC&U2015). Teachers who encourage their students do not employ repetitive rote learning in their classrooms but instead engage their students in problem-solving novel activities. Students opinions are triggered by these teachers through open-ended questions which encourage students to use personal judgment in coming up with opinions. Activities that require analytical skills, evaluation, and connections are chosen by these teachers (AAC&U2015). Students are expected to do research and homework timely and to effectively manage all their time. Due to the effectiveness of accelerated learning and tracking, there is a need for confidence amongst vocabulary teachers in advocating for them (Jenkins2014). Some changes in vocabulary curriculum and instructional organization have to be made.

According to Riddell & Roger (2014), it is also important to note that most modern class vocabulary students prefer participation and achievement of the best through being natured by the teacher through offering them good care. There is no need for one to concentrate on materialistic messages instead of caring for the other. Though the need for excellence is dominant among students, it becomes hard for them to work towards attaining it if they do not believe that they are under good care and care for others. Teachers need to practice looping. They need to stay with their modern class students for some time to see that they get to learn what they need, their strengths, and attain their trust. This helps them in setting up required lesson plans for these students which might be contrary to the set strategies but helpful in achieving success in teaching and learning vocabulary (AAC&U2015).

Educators also need to respect the way their students were brought up or raised and express great concern for the education of modern school students. In some cases, it remains entirely a role of teachers to teach children and parents don't even get involved in whatever is done at school. Some educators discourage leisure while encouraging the focus on schoolwork (Cuban 2015). Though parents might take on different jobs, the sometimes stop their children from doing any work in that they can get done with school work in time. This has led to higher abilities in learning vocabulary among some students than others though the involvement of parents in the education of their children is good for them to achieve a lot from learning.

Parents and guardians also stand in as the first teachers any child comes across though they remain unaware of their role in molding their children's communication skills and language development. Most children learn well languages spoken or used at home the more they get involved in interactions with people at home, the more they are able to learn the language being used (Jenkins2014). This crucial role can be supported by teachers through sharing information concerning the link between children's vocabulary and home communication. Teachers can serve as culture brokers by mainly encouraging parents to play a role in their children's vocabulary development. Teachers also need to tell parents how they have to converse with their children in preparation for classroom communication (Jenkins2014). It might be hard for parents to know their role in supporting their children in vocabulary learning through the discussion of its importance and introducing them to informal vocabulary learning resources. This is usually done under teachers' recommendations for the benefit of children. Through the elicitation of different experiences before the validation of what has to be discussed by teachers in modern classrooms, students are able to get more motivation and self-esteem (Cuban2015). It is evident that whenever students are asked about what they basically know what is to be taught and what they want to learn before any vocabulary class. In case their ideas are taken up as guidelines to what is delivered to them. They feel good about it and are encouraged to do more research about other topics to be handled. The teacher also gains an insight into what students knew about certain topics before they are taught new concepts which help them plan well for what to teach. Cuban (2015), further state that the observation of what was done by men and women who belonged to one's race makes students' self-esteem is increased. It is important for all vocabulary teachers to focus on topics students feel attached to or topics that they find meaningful to them. This allows students to tune their focus to language reading, thinking, practice, and writing in real, interactive and meaningful situations. Students also come to learn that each of their culture and languages are valued and appreciated.

## 7. Conclusion

For each person to learn new vocabulary there is need to first learn all words relevant to the study subject, learn frequently heard words, learning words that one might need to use frequently, desist from learning unfamiliar and useless words, deciding on how to learn some words of interest (Jenkins2014).. These words can be easily grasped by being written in one's notebook, small cards along with their respective definitions from where they are constantly rehearsed, pronouncing the word by different set groups, writing them in computer files, associating them to pictures, asking another person to test you, and using the words in conversations and writing (Stedman2015).

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