

Teaching of English Vocabulary

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Abstract: Learning Vocabulary is an essential part of teaching and mastering English as a second language or foreign language for teachers, students, researchers, and material writers (Bai, 2018). However, syllabus and textbooks have not been giving clear guidelines on how teachers and learners can best pursue English vocabularies. Besides, vocabularies are important for student's communication and language skills development, since lack of adequate words makes it difficult to relate ideas, feelings, and thoughts of who individuals are and their surrounding world (Susanto, 2017). In this case, language teachers teach English Vocabulary by application of various strategies in either introducing new vocabularies, making the students easy to recall, and practising the vocabularies in a relevant and engaging manner (Asyiah, 2017). Deni and Fahriany (2020) point out that when teaching English second language vocabulary either in a classroom or through the internet, language teachers should apply several strategies such as, creating context around the vocabularies being taught, teaching relevant English vocabularies that students can practice immediately and repetitively in their daily activities, and considering the age of the students (Den & Fahriany, 2020). In addition, Vocabulary is one of the three key areas of language learning that includes grammar and pronunciation. It is the basic part of any language since it's the part required to make sentences, express ideas, and communicate. Schmitt, (2007) maintains that it is important for teachers to acknowledge the vocabulary challenge facing learners before designing the principled vocabulary programs for their students because English comprises of the greatest number of words of other major languages, thus the learning of its vocabularies sufficiently is a formidable role. This essay seeks to explain and critically reflect the ways of teaching the English language in an observed lesson episode, analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of the observed episode, and provide recommendations for its improvements.

Keywords: Teaching English Vocabulary; Teaching English; Foreign Language Teaching

1. Teacher's lesson episode I currently observed

1.1 General description of the episode

The lesson episode that I observed and am going to critically reflect was a 40 minutes' lesson taught by a non-native English teacher. The class was comprised of entry and intermediate level six students^[1]. The students were at different levels of English learning, and they were studying English as the second or foreign language. The teacher was teaching the English vocabulary by the use of Talk-radio podcasts that was absolutely intercultural for listening activities. The teacher had two radios and divided the students into two groups by mixing both entry and intermediate student levels. The talk-radio podcast on an audio clip about intercultural communication which was related to previously taught topics on human intercultural communication including diversity, demographic, ethics, global village, heterogeneity, assimilable, and class structure. The aim of the teacher was to have students listen to understand the use of different vocabularies how they are applied in a sentence and their meaning. The teacher played the Podcast in two groups, one after the other to avoid destruction. The Podcast involved an audio clip on an episode of human intercultural communication. The Podcast played for ten minutes where All the students were listening attentively. The teacher wrote various questions on board and asked the students to answer on their sheets individually. The questions were;

What was the episode about?

Who are the main characters involved?

Where are they?

What is the mood in the conversation?

The episode was related to the one taught at the previous lesson., where the teacher wanted to test the understanding of the student on various vocabularies related to intercultural communication. The teacher then wrote a list of various vocabularies used in the episode and asked students to formulate sentences that had the main parts of speech. A few of the students had answered all the questions, the teacher then told them to discuss their answers with their group members. The purposes of this part were to motivate their peers who seemed to take a longer time in understanding the construction of sentences and meaning of some various words, which then followed a class discussion. The teacher applied various ways of teaching the English lesson from what I observed^[2].

1.2 In depth discussion of the episode

First, the teacher started the lesson by greeting the students, followed by a small recap of what the student remembered from

the lesson of the last class. He then carefully selected the words to teach in that particular class whose topic was human intercultural communication. The teacher chose all the words that were taught in the previous lesson and related to the current lesson^[3]. The teacher taught words in a context which enabled the students to connect words talk in previous and the current lesson, which motivated students since they could be able to draw meaning and remember the vocabularies taught easily. Besides, the teacher engaged students in their own discussion, and the two groups discussed their answer with one another and later as a class. The teacher-guided the discussions where learners were engaged in expressing, negotiating to mean, and their thought, ideas, and intentions while discussing their answers with their peers.

Second, the teacher played the Podcast that had a comprehensive question concerning human intercultural communication and had the students listen to understand the concept and the meaning. After playing the Podcast, the teacher then asked students to write a summary of the short question they had listened to demonstrate their understanding. The teacher replayed the Podcast for five means for students to understand better. Besides, to teach the students the practice of listening for general meaning, the teacher used a podcast for an open discussion. The teacher wrote all the questions he wanted the students to engage with on the board which the students discussed with their fellow.

Additionally, the different Podcast to introduce new vocabularies, in doing so, he first the targeted key vocabularies, and made a list of the new words^[4]. The list of vocabularies acted as a guide for students while listening to the Podcast. Similarly, the teacher offered a transcript of the Podcast as a cloze activity that had blank spaces where the students were to fill the words. In this case, the students populated the blank spaces with the correct key vocabularies. A lost, the teacher applied vocabulary Bingo to make the student recognize the new vocabulary words by use of the game of Bingo, which involved the teacher choosing a podcast with the key vocabularies. The teacher created bingo sheets on the keywords and played the Podcast as the students listened for the phrases. If the students get one phrase, they closed the square, and if they got five squares in the same row, they had won.

The teacher then decided to test for grammatical constructions towards the end of the lesson, and he then used a podcast that students listened to identify grammatical construction concerning the selected topic. Here the students listened to the Podcast and circled the multiple-choice sheet provided by the teacher all instances of target grammar construction that they had heard^[5]. This worked so well, and all students were actively engaged, and I could tell they were enjoying than the lesson. Lastly, to ensure students were able to pronounce all the vocabulary words taught in the class, he used a podcast for the pronunciation of selected words, where he emphasized on specific aspects of pronunciation such as intonation, stress, or accent. For this particular class, the teacher was interested in intonation, where the students repeated the words after the speaker and emphasized on the right tonal variation for each word. This Podcast helped students in differentiating between vocabularies with falling and rising intonation.

2. The strengths and weaknesses of the observed lesson episode

2.1 strengths

Acquisition of foreign language skills is most effective with a practice of motivating and sustaining lengthy practices outside the classroom. In this regard, a teacher creating a desire for communicating in the target language further motivates students^[6]. The used of Podcast in teaching English as a foreign or second language helps in developing listening and speaking skills. During the English lesson, students actively participated in activities, summarizing what they listened to, identifying grammatical constructions, noted down new vocabulary phrases, the teacher asked the students to use the new phrases in various activities (mardila Ramli & hari Kurniawan, 2017). These activities proceed to be realistic since they applied them in learning English learning. Besides, the learners repeated pronunciation of vocabulary words after the native speaker when they listened to pronunciation podcasts making them desire to learn English and be fluent like the native speaker they had listened (Mashhad and Jalilifar, 2016). Similarly, the discussion held by students after the assignment helped them in sharing their expression they come across while listening to the Podcast. Also listening to the pronunciation podcast, the students were able to correct pronunciation and accent of the English language as well as exposing the students to native English speakers.

Podcasts offer students an opportunity to respond to the teachers enthusiastically and speed the level of their learning according to their desire. In particular, they lead students towards a collaborative learning practice, thus improving their speaking skills. For instance, exposure to listening programs helps students in developing listening, speaking, writing, and reading skills for the English language that can be helpful in their life even outside the classroom an aspect that makes Podcast superior to traditional methods of teaching English as a second or foreign language. The podcasting used by the teacher helped to augment the motivation level of learning the English language, the students were so actively involved in listening to understand the episodes which they were to answer the required questions provided by the teacher. Similarly, the secondary level learners were able to differentiate between the native and non-native English speakers after listening to the podcasts^[7].

Moreover, the use of Podcast made the English lesson convenient and offer a wide range of teaching activities within a short period. The students were able to learn listening skills, speaking, and pronunciation with easy (Springer, Boston & Chaikovska,2018). Similarly, the engaging nature of podcasts made the lesson interesting since all the student seemed to be involved in the learning activity, through listening, summarizing what they are hearing, pronouncing words after the speaker, and even using vocabulary bingo to fill the right phrases in blank spaces (Kafes & Caner, 2020). Again the students were curious about what the episode entails the speaker is expressing their ideas, providing more interest with the English lesson.

2.2 Weakness of using Podcast in teaching the English language

The biggest challenge I observed that the English teacher faced while teaching the students was getting to engage in the lesson outside the normal classroom. During the lesson, some of the materials not interesting topics since the students felt that the language concept was not directly related to their daily lives. Thus some few students seemed bored since their curiosity about how the world and other cultures. Consequently, the Podcast was played by the teacher, making the aural memory to be limited in retaining information

Some students could lose their attention at some point, making them skip some important points of the audio clip. This becomes a major challenge while answering questions since the students were not able to answer all the questions or give an accurate summary of the Podcast. Also, the topics which were long and took more than ten minutes of audio play were not effectively taught since student's attention diverted in the middle of the program. Besides, students were at a different level of English proficient, thus some were limited in understanding the accent and territorial dialect which were added into the mix. Again, the new vocabulary words in some of the podcasts were hard for students to pronounce easily and not related to their day-to-day living experiences. Similarly, most teachers of other lessons are not used to podcasts; thus, students were too not familiar to having being taught by the use of Podcast^[8].

The use of an audio Podcast was not effective since there was a lack of on-verbal clues such as body language from the speaker impacted the main aim of the message(Wurst,2020).

3. Suggestions

From the weaknesses observed in the lesson episode, I will like to provide various recommendations to improve on the teaching activities involved in using podcasts.

With the student at a different level of English language proficient, I recommend language teachers teaching English as a second or foreign language to use podcast audios that are relevant and easily understood by the learner at their current level of English proficient. Also, to emphasize on the Vocabulary of speech that assumes that the amount of vocabularies needed by the learners for daily speech is less than that of written English language.

For the choice of topic to be taught by the use of podcast strategy, I would recommend teachers to select short topics with terms that are specific to English discipline, and interesting to fully draw the attention of learners and encourage them to be actively engaged in the learning activity.

To overcome aural memory limitation in the retention of the information, I recommend the learners during the English lesson to be allowed to play the podcasts so that the learner can control the audio presentation by pausing and replaying the information.

With the loss of non-verbal cues in the audio Podcast, I would suggest the use of video podcasts in the next English lesson teaching practices to effectively display the intent of the speaker or message.

4. Conclusion

Teaching and learning English as a second or foreign language requires a great deal of vocabulary knowledge. Understanding the effective vocabulary learning program is a crucial aspect when teaching and learning the English language. All the English vocabulary learning partners such as teachers, students, researchers, and material writers need towards moving learner lexicons at learning continuum^[9]. The effective learning process of English vocabulary learning-focused at meta- maximizing principle of sustaining classroom engagement. Teacher and other educators are supposed to provide teaching strategies in teaching English vocabularies to students that aims at motivating and encourages the students to memorize old vocabularies they learned and desire to learn more new vocabularies. For instance, teaching English to young learners requires the teacher to be innately curious, while teaching to teens, the Vocabulary should be aimed at making them understand the music they listen, books they read, or films they watch, and vocabularies that can assist them in expressing their feelings. Similarly, teaching English to adults requires the use of appropriate English vocabularies for relating both business and personal levels. In this regard, the adults depend on the teacher to provide the common and best phrases and word that improves their communication skills^[10]. The observed lesson episode, the teacher used, talk-radio podcast to teacher English vocabulary in classroom, this approach helps in encouraging and motivating students as it enhances their listening and speaking skills.

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