

# 1 Presenting vocabulary

## Aims of this unit

- To establish the importance of teaching the meaning of new vocabulary as well as the form, and of showing how words are used in context.
- To give teachers techniques for showing the meaning of new words.
- To show teachers how to reinforce new vocabulary by asking questions using the new items.

This unit is concerned with basic techniques for presenting new words, either before reading a text or dialogue, or as they arise in the course of a lesson. Other techniques for teaching vocabulary are developed in later units – Unit 5: Using a reading text (guessing unknown words), Unit 7: Using visual aids (using flashcards) and Unit 14: Eliciting (eliciting words from a picture).

## INTRODUCTION

### ► Workbook Activity 1 ◀

1. Divide the teachers into pairs or small groups and ask them to discuss the questions in the Teacher's Workbook.

Here are some techniques for teaching new words.

- Say the word clearly and write it on the board.
- Get the class to repeat the word in chorus.
- Translate the word into the students' own language.
- Ask students to translate the word.
- Draw a picture to show what the word means.
- Give an English example to show how the word is used.
- Ask questions using the new word.

Which are the most useful techniques?

Can you think of any other techniques you could use?

Briefly discuss with the teachers what answers they gave; but do not go into detail about any of the techniques at this point. The purpose of

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these questions is simply to start teachers thinking about their own teaching and about possible techniques for presenting vocabulary.

2. To focus on the value of different techniques, demonstrate two different ways of presenting a new word. The first involves direct translation followed by drilling; the second involves giving an example in English and asking the teachers to guess what the word means.

### *Demonstration one*

Present the word 'rumble'.

- i) Write it on the board, give a direct translation of the word, and if necessary explain in the teachers' own language that it is the noise made by thunder – but do *not* give any examples.
- ii) Get teachers to repeat the word a few times in chorus.

### *Demonstration two*

Present the word 'grumble'.

- i) Write the word on the board, then give an example in English to show what it means, e.g.:  
Some people grumble about everything. For example, they grumble about the weather. If it's sunny, they say, 'Oh dear, it's much too hot today'; if it's cool, they say, 'Oh, it's too cold' – they're never satisfied.
- ii) Check that teachers understand the word by asking them to say it in their own language.

Discuss the two presentations. Establish that the first presentation was obviously quicker, and also much easier for the teacher. The second presentation took a longer time, but it achieved more and was more interesting.

Try to bring out these points:

- Translating a new word is in itself a useful technique – it is often the simplest and clearest way of showing what a word means. But if we only give a direct translation, students cannot see how the word is *used* in an English sentence; to show this we need to give an *example*.
- Instead of *telling* the students what the word means, we can give examples and then ask *them* to give a translation. This checks that they have understood, and encourages them to listen to the word being used in English.
- Just getting students to repeat words is of limited value. It focusses attention on the *form* of the word only (how it is pronounced). It does not teach the *meaning* of the word, which is more important.

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You will now consider in detail some basic techniques for showing the meaning of words.

**SHOWING THE MEANING OF WORDS****Showing meaning visually**

1. Write these words on the board:

watch window elbow

Ask teachers how they could most easily show the meaning of the words.

*Answer:* By simply pointing at them and saying 'Look – this is a watch', etc.

Point out that this is one way of showing the meaning of new words: by showing a *real object*. Discuss what kinds of words can be presented in this way.

*Possible answers:*

Anything that is already in the classroom: furniture, clothes, parts of the body. Also many objects that can be brought into the classroom: other items of clothing (hats, ties, handkerchiefs); food (oranges, rice); small objects from the home (soap, cups, keys), etc.

If necessary, quickly demonstrate a presentation of the word 'watch':

T: Look – this is a watch (*pointing to his or her watch*). A watch. A watch.

Ss: A watch.

T: (*gesture*) What is it?

Ss: A watch.

(*and so on*)

2. Write these words on the board:

tree tractor cow

Ask teachers how they could show the meaning of the words.

*Answer:*

By showing a *picture*. This can be done in two ways:

- By drawing a picture on the board.
- By showing a picture prepared before the lesson (a drawing or photograph).

Discuss which of the words could easily and clearly be drawn on the board. Ask a teacher to come to the front and show how to draw each object.

3. Write these words on the board:

sneeze dig stumble

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Again ask teachers how they could show the meaning of the words.

*Answer:*

By *miming*, using *actions* and *facial expressions*.

Ask teachers to mime each of the three verbs. Then discuss what other words could be taught using mime.

*Possible answers:*

Most action verbs (sit, stand, open, write); some adjectives (happy, worried, ill).

If necessary, quickly demonstrate a presentation of the word 'sneeze':

T: Look – (*mime someone sneezing*) Atchoo! I've just sneezed.  
Sneeze. Sneeze. Can you say it?

Ss: Sneeze.

T: Again.

Ss: Sneeze.

4. Make these general points about presenting vocabulary visually (using real objects, pictures, or mime):
  - For suitable vocabulary, it is a very effective method: it is direct, it is interesting, and it makes an impression on the class.
  - Of course, not all words can be presented in this way. Vocabulary should only be presented visually if it can be done *quickly, easily, and clearly*.

**Giving examples**

1. Another way to show what words mean is by giving an *example*, using the word in a *context*. Demonstrate this by presenting the words 'building' and 'lazy'.

*Demonstration one*

Houses are buildings. This school is also a building. In big cities there are many large buildings – there are hotels, and offices, and cinemas. They are all buildings of different kinds.

*Demonstration two*

Some people work hard. Other people don't work hard – they are lazy. For example, I have a brother. He is very lazy. He gets up late, and then he does nothing all day. I say to him, 'Don't be so lazy! Do some work!'

Make these points:

- It is not necessary to give a complicated explanation; the meaning can be shown by simple sentences. This can be done by making

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statements using the word (e.g. 'Houses are buildings. This school is also a building'), or by imagining an example (e.g. 'I have a brother. He is very lazy. He gets up late, and then he does nothing all day').

- A good example should clearly show the meaning of the word to someone who does *not* know it already. So it is not enough just to say 'My brother is lazy' – it doesn't show what 'lazy' means. We need to add, e.g. 'He gets up late, and then does nothing all day'.
- Examples are especially useful for showing the meaning of abstract words, e.g. love, happiness, imagine, quality, impossible.

**► Workbook Activity 2 ◀**

2. Divide teachers into groups of four or five, and ask them to look at the examples in the Teacher's Workbook.
  1. The examples beside the six words below are not enough to make the meaning of the words clear. *Add* one or two sentences to each one, so that the meaning of the word is shown clearly.
    - a) *market*      You can buy food at the market.
    - b) *clothes*     In the morning we put on our clothes.
    - c) *noisy*        Students are often very noisy.
    - d) *look for*     I'm looking for my pen.
    - e) *visit*         Last weekend I visited my uncle.
    - f) *happiness*   He was full of happiness.
    - g) *impossible* Your plan is quite impossible.
  2. What *other* techniques could you use (pictures, mime, etc.) to make the meaning of each word clearer?

In their groups, teachers should decide how to make each example clearer, by adding one or two sentences. At least one person in the group should write their examples down.

When most groups have finished, discuss the examples together. If you like, ask teachers to come to the front and demonstrate giving their examples.

**Combining different techniques****► Workbook Activity 3 ◀**

1. Point out that often a *combination* of techniques can be used to show the meaning of a word. Demonstrate this by presenting the word 'smile', drawing a picture on the board first:

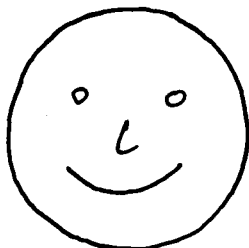


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T: Look – he's smiling. Now look at me. I'm smiling (*show by facial expression*). Smile. We smile when we are happy. Smile. (*gesture*)

Ss: Smile.

T: Good. What does it mean? (*students give translation*)

Discuss the different techniques you used in the demonstration, and why you used each one.

- Picture on board (interesting, students remember it).
- Facial expression (gives meaning clearly).
- Examples (show how 'smile' is used as a verb).
- Translation (to make sure everyone understands).

Point out that each technique is *very quick* (a few seconds), and they all reinforce each other.

2. Divide the teachers into groups and ask them to look at the words in the Teacher's Workbook.

Look at these words. Decide exactly how you would present each one. If possible, think of a *variety* of techniques.

laugh    absent    cheese    cold    apron    wall

In their groups, they should decide how they would present each word. Make sure that they discuss *in detail* what they would do: if they would give an example, they should decide exactly what example to give; if they would draw a picture, they should draw it on a piece of paper.

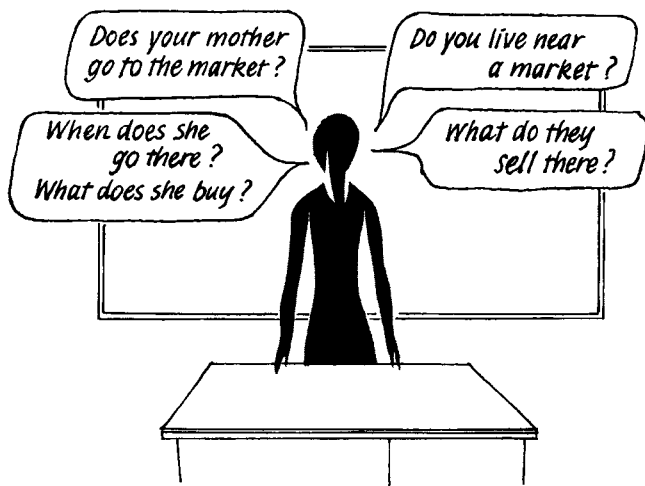
When most groups have finished, discuss each word in turn. If you like, ask teachers to come to the front and demonstrate the techniques they thought of.

**USING A NEW WORD****► Workbook Activity 4 ◀**

1. Ask the teachers to look at the picture in the Teacher's Workbook, which shows a teacher using a new word to ask a few simple questions round the class.

A. The teacher has just presented the word 'market'. Now she is asking questions using the new word. What is the purpose of this?

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Discuss the purpose of questions of this kind. Establish that:

- They help the teacher to be sure that students really understand the word.
- They give the students more examples of how the word is used, in a way that involves the class.
- They give a chance to practise other language (big, small, present simple tense, cook, etc.).

Point out that questions using a new word should be *simple* and require only *short* answers. If necessary, give a few more examples of your own, using other words.

2. Divide the teachers into pairs or groups, and ask them to look at the words in part B of the Workbook Activity.

B. Think of two or three questions you could ask the class, using these words.

to cook    lion    holiday    magazine    windy

They should imagine that they have just presented the words and should think of a few questions using each word.

3. If you like, ask teachers to 'try out' their questions, using the other teachers as a class.

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VOCABULARY EXPANSION

► Workbook Activity 5 ◀

1. When students come across a new word, they are likely to be interested in learning other related words, and this presents a natural opportunity for vocabulary development. This is sometimes called ‘vocabulary expansion’.

Ask the teachers to look at the sets of words in the Teacher’s Workbook, which suggest two possible ways of expanding vocabulary based on the word ‘cook’.

1. Look at these sets of words. How are the words in each box related to ‘cook’?

a)      cook

         ↓

bake	fry
boil	grill

b)      cook

         ↓

stove	stir
pot	spoon

Discuss the difference between the two sets:

- The words in (a) are *synonyms*: they are words of the same type and have the same general meaning (all methods of cooking).
- The words in (b) are related by *context*: they might all be used when talking about cooking, although they are not synonyms.

2. Discuss possible techniques for introducing sets of related words like those in the examples:
- The teacher could talk about cooking, introducing the new words and writing them on the board; then use the new words in questions to involve the class, as in Workbook Activity 4.
  - The teacher could try to *elicit* the new words from the students and then write them on the board, e.g.:

What about bread? How do we cook bread? What about eggs?  
[Note: Eliciting techniques are dealt with in detail in Unit 14.]

3. Divide the teachers into pairs and ask them to look at the words in the second part of the Workbook Activity.

2. Imagine you are teaching the words below.  
Think of four or five other related words that you could teach at the same time.
- a) thief  
b) carpet



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c) customs officer

d) marry

Ask teachers to think of other words that could be introduced as part of a vocabulary expansion activity. The words can either be synonyms or be related by context.

*Possible words:*

- a) thief, burglar, robber; steal, rob, burgle; theft, burglary, robbery; crime, criminal; catch, arrest; attack, break in(to).
- b) carpet, rug, mat, doormat; weave, woven; beat.
- c) customs officer; go through customs; goods, declare, pay duty; smuggle, drugs, weapons.
- d) marry, married, wedding; husband, wife, fiancé(e); get engaged, get married, separate, get divorced.

**ACTIVE AND PASSIVE VOCABULARY****► Workbook Activity 6 ◀**

1. Point out that we do not need to spend the same amount of time and care on presenting all new vocabulary; some vocabulary will be more important to students than others. In general, we can distinguish two types of vocabulary:
  - Words which students will need to understand and also use themselves. We call this *active vocabulary*. In teaching active vocabulary, it is usually worth spending time giving examples and asking questions, so that students can really see how the word is used.
  - Words which we want students to understand (e.g. when reading a text), but which they will not need to use themselves. We call this *passive vocabulary*. To save time, it is often best to present it quite quickly, with a simple example. If it appears as part of a text or dialogue, we can often leave students to guess the word from the context.

Emphasise that students should understand far more words than they can produce – so we should not try to treat all new words as active vocabulary.
2. Divide the teachers into pairs or groups, and ask them to look at the text in the Teacher's Workbook and the new vocabulary below it.

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In Britain, the weather is very varied; people never know what it will be like the next day.

The summer is warmer than the winter, but even in summer the average temperature is only 16°. Sometimes the sun shines, but at other times the sky is covered in cloud, and it often rains.

In winter it is sometimes very cold, especially in the north of the country. The temperature may fall below 0°, and then there is often snow and ice.

The best season of the year is probably late spring. At this time of year the weather is often sunny and quite warm; the countryside looks very green, and there are wild flowers everywhere.

(adapted from a text from *The Cambridge English Course* Book 1: M. Swan and C. Walter)

1. Imagine you want to present these new words from the text.  
weather varied average temperature cloud  
snow ice season spring sunny countryside  
Which words would you present as *active* vocabulary, and which would you present as *passive* vocabulary? Write the words in *two* lists.
2. How would you *present* the words?

Ask teachers to write active and passive vocabulary in two lists.

3. When most groups have finished, discuss the words together. Encourage teachers to give their own views, and try to build up two 'agreed' lists on the board.

A possible answer:

ACTIVE	PASSIVE
weather	varied
cloud	temperature
spring	average
sunny	season
(snow?)	countryside
(ice?)	(snow?)
	(ice?)

4. Discuss with the teachers how they might present:
- the active vocabulary;
  - the passive vocabulary.

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## LESSON PREPARATION

### ► Workbook Activity 7 ◀

Either organise the preparation during the training session, with teachers working together in pairs or groups, or let teachers prepare in their own time after the session.

## FURTHER READING

- R. Gairns and S. Redman (1986) *Working with Words*, Cambridge University Press. Discusses theoretical background behind vocabulary learning and gives practical ideas for teaching vocabulary.
- J. Morgan and M. Rinvolucri (1986) *Vocabulary*, Oxford University Press. A resource book for teachers, containing practical activities for vocabulary learning.
- M. J. Wallace (1982) *Teaching Vocabulary*, Heinemann Educational. A practical guide to vocabulary learning.