TECHNIQUES IN PRESENTING VOCABULARY TO YOUNG EFL LEARNERS

Annisa Awaludin∗
annisa_awaludin@yahoo.com
∗Annisa Graduated in 22 February 2013 from English Education Study Program of Indonesia University of Education

Abstract: This paper reports on research results aimed at investigating the techniques used by a teacher of a young learner course in presenting meaning and form of vocabulary, as well as the reasons in employing the techniques. This study applied framework from Takač (2008). Observations and interview were carried out to collect the data. The findings indicate that the teacher applied various techniques with various reasons, both in presenting word meaning and form. In presenting word meaning, the teacher mostly employed Real Objects which comprised the use of pictures, realia, and demonstration. In presenting word form, the teacher mostly employed Graphic Form.

Keywords: *Teaching techniques, vocabulary, presenting vocabulary, young learners*

Introduction

In acquiring a language, vocabulary, as one of the knowledge areas in language, plays a great role for young learners (Cameron, 2001). Linse (2005) states that young learners' vocabulary development is an important aspect of their language development. However, young EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners have lack amount and type of exposures to English. Their experience of the language outside the classroom is very little (Cameron, 2001).

Concerning the issue of English limited exposures, most of EFL learners will be very dependent on explicit or direct vocabulary instructions. In direct vocabulary instructions, teachers' role is very crucial because they introduce new vocabulary to the learners, using some appropriate techniques. Techniques employed by teachers depend on some factors, such as the content, time availability, and its value for the learners (Takač, 2008). This makes teachers have some certain reasons in employing certain techniques in presenting vocabulary.

This study, therefore, aims at investigating the techniques employed by the teacher in presenting vocabulary to the learners and the reasons in employing the techniques. The result of this research is expected to show the present condition and provide useful information which later is expected to be a professional source for other young learner teachers.

Techniques in Presenting Word Meaning

- Translation

    Even though translation does not create a need or motivation of the learners to think about word meaning (Cameron, 2001), in some situations translation could be effective for teachers, such as when dealing with incidental vocabulary (Thornbury, 2002), checking students' comprehension, and pointing out similarities or differences between first and second language, when these are likely to cause errors (Takač, 2008).

- Real Objects or Phenomena

    This technique includes the use of realia, visual aids, and demonstration. They can function to help learners in remembering vocabulary better, because our memory for objects and pictures is very reliable (Gairns & Redman, 1986) and visual technique can act as cues for remembering words (Takač, 2008). In addition, Gairns & Redman(1986) states, real objects technique is appropriately employed for beginners or young learners and when presenting concrete vocabulary.

- Meaning Definition

    Meaning definition includes: full definition, analytical definition, giving examples, and synonyms or antonyms. Presented by meaning definition, students may be more cognitively engaged because they do mental work a little harder to understand a word meaning (Thornbury, 2002). In employing definition, Allen (1983) suggests that teachers need to show the meaning in simple English, using words that are within the students' current range (Thornbury, 2002).

- Presentation through Context

This technique is appropriate to employ when the vocabularies become more abstract (Gairns& Redman, 1986). There are two types of this technique: giving an example situation and giving example sentences. Presented by this technique, learners work a mental process of guessing from examples, can memorize the word better and have the information about word's form and grammar (Thornbury, 2008).

- Learners' Active Involvement

Employingthis technique, the teacher encourages the students to find out word's meaning by elicitation (Takač, 2008). Elicitation maximizes learners' speaking opportunities, and acts as a way of checking learners' understanding (Thornbury, 2002). This technique also includes personalization, which is using the word by learners in a context or sentence that is related to their life.

Techniques in Presenting Word Form

- Presentation of the Graphic Form

This technique is employed when presenting the written form of vocabulary item, such as by writing the words on the board, underlining or highlighting the words on the text, and creating flashcards which consist of the words (word flashcards) (Takač, 2008).

- Phonetic Transcription

The second technique is by highlighting word form by writing its phonetic transcription. This technique is less necessary for young learners since they are still consolidating their writing skills and generally good at imitating foreign sounds (Mompean, 2005).

- Drilling

Drilling is employed to make learners get accustomed to the word form especially to how it sounds. To make learners more familiar with the word, drilling should be clear and natural (Thornbury, 2002). Drilling is very necessary since learners need to say the word to themselves as they learn it, to recall the words from memory (Ellis & Beaton, 1993a,in Read, 2000).

- Spelling the Word

The primary means of spelling is actually memorizing words (Simonsen & Gunter, 2001, in Reed, 2012). Word spelling needs to be considered since spelling form of English words is not always be inferred by the pronunciation.

Related to the techniques, Pinter (2006) argues that teachers are suggested to conduct planned presentation of vocabulary as various as possible,so it is better that teachers present word meaning and form by combining more than one technique. In addition, Takač (2008) points out that in choosing which techniques to be used in the classroom, teachers consider time availability, the content or teaching materials, and its value for the learners.

Data collection

Involving one teacher of a young learner course and her eight girl students in two classes, this study employed observations and interview based on Takač (2008).

Techniques Used by the Teacher

The result of the study showed that the teacher employed all techniques in presenting word meaning and three techniques in presenting word form. The following tables show the result of five observations on the teacher's techniques in presenting the meaning and form of vocabulary.

Table 1.Types of Techniques in Presenting the Meaning of Vocabulary

No	Types of Techniques	Observations				
		1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
1.	Translation	√	√	√	√	√
2.	Real Objects					
	a. Visual aids (Pictures, flashcards, photos, board drawings)	√	√	-	√	√
	b. Gesture/mime/action	√	√	√	√	-
	c. Realia	-	√	-	-	-
3.	Definition					
	a. Full definition	√	-	√	-	√
	b. Analytical definition	-	-	-	-	-
	c. Example (super or sub - ordinate term)	√	-	-	√	√
	d. Synonym/antonym	√	-	√	√	√
4.	Context					
	a. Example situation	-	-	√	-	-
	b. Example sentences	√	-	√	-	√
5.	Active Involvement					
	a. Elicitation	√	√	√	√	√
	b. Personalization	√	√	√	-	-

Table 2. Types of Techniquesin Presenting the Formof Vocabulary

No	Types of Techniques	Observations				
		1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
1.	Graphic Form					
	a. Board work	√	√	√	√	√
	b. Underlined words on a text	-	-	-	√	√
	c. Word flashcards	√	-	√	-	-
2.	Phonetic Transcription	-	-	-	-	-
3.	Drilling	√	√	√	√	√
4.	Spelling the Word	√	√	√	√	-

In presenting one planned vocabulary item, the teacher usually combined more than one technique, instead of employed one single technique. This research confirms previous finding that teachers are suggested to employ planned vocabulary presentation as various as possible (Pinter, 2006). The findings showed that the teacher combined more than one techniqueto maximize the possibility of the students' understanding of the vocabulary item and to help store the vocabulary to their long term memory retention.

Based on the data, the teacher did not apply Phonetic Transcription. This finding is in line with Mompean(2005) that this technique is less essential for young learners since they are still consolidating their writing skills and generally good at imitating foreign sounds.

Choosing those techniques, the teacher explained some reasons as revealed from interview and cross-checked with the data obtained from observations. The reasons in employing the techniques in presenting the meaning and form of vocabulary are shown in the following table.

Table 3. Reasons in Employing Teaching Techniques

Techniques	Reasons
Presenting Word Meaning	
1. Translation	a. It can save time b. It acts out as a short route
2. Real Objects	a. It fits with learners characteristics b. It gives long term memory retention to the learners
3. Meaning Definition	a. It can help the students understand the word meaning b. It acts out as a short route
4. Presentation through Context	a. It benefits learners to have the information about word's form and word's use b. It gives long term memory retention to the learners
5. Learners' Active Involvement	a. It maximizes student's speaking opportunities b. It gives long term memory retention to the learners
Presenting Word Form	
6. Presentation of the Graphic Form	a. It makes the words more organized and practical
7. Oral Drill	a. It makes the students become accustomed to the word form b. It can help the students able to memorize the new vocabulary
c. Spelling	a. It helps the students when they forgot how to write a word b. It can help the students able to memorize the new vocabulary

It can be seen that the teacher had several different reasons in employing techniques in presenting vocabulary. However, there are some techniques which have the same reason. Those aregive long term memory retention to the learners and act as a short route.

Conclusion

The result of the study revealed that in presenting the meaning and form of vocabulary, the teacher applied different techniques with different reasons. In presenting word meaning, the teacher frequently employed Real Objects technique. One of the reasons is because young learners mostly learn concrete words, to which the technique is appropriately used. Other techniques such as Meaning Definition and Contextual Example were employed to more concrete words. Meanwhile, in presenting the form of vocabulary, the teacher mostly employed Presentation through Graphic Form technique since it was the only technique in presenting written form of planned vocabulary and the teacher employed this technique to all planned vocabulary she taught during the lessons.

Before presenting meaning or form of vocabulary items, teachers need to notice some considerations such as the type of the vocabulary, the students' level and characteristics, and also the value of the techniques for the learners.Teachers are suggested to use real objects technique as often as possible when presenting vocabulary to young learners especially when the words are concrete. Besides interesting to young learners, gesture, pictures, and realia can help them remember words better.

References

Allen, V. F. (1983). *Techniques in teaching vocabulary.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cameron, L. (2001). *Teaching languages to young learners*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gairns, R. & Redman, S. (1986). *Working with words: A guide to teaching and learning vocabulary.* USA: Cambridge University Press.

Linse, C. T. & Nunan, D. (Ed). (2005). *Practical english language teaching: Young learners.* New York: McGraw-Hill ESL/ELT.

Mompean, J. A. (2005). *Taking advantage of phonetic symbols in the efl classroom.*[Online]. Available at: http://www.phon.ucl.ac.uk/home/johnm/ptlc2005/pdf/ptlcp28.pdf [December, 16, 2012]

Takač, V. P., & Singleton, D. (Eds.). (2008). *Vocabulary learning strategies and foreign language acquisition.* Canada: Multilingual Matters Ltd.

Thorburry, S. (2002). *How to teach vocabulary.* England:Pearson Education Limited.

Hunt, A. & Beglar, D. 2002. Current research and practice in teaching vocabulary. In J. C. Richards and W. A. Renandya. (2002). *Methodology in language teaching*. (pp. 258-264) New York: Cambridge University Press.

Pinter, A. (2006). *Teaching young language learners*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Read, J. (2000). *Assessing vocabulary*. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.

Reed, D. K. (2012). *Why teach spelling?* Portsmouth, NH: RMC Research Corporation, Center on Instruction.