



外语教学法丛书之十八

# TECHNIQUES IN TEACHING VOCABULARY 词汇教学技巧

Virginia French Allen

上海外语教育出版社

SHANGHAI FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION PRESS



外教社

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## 总 序

近年来随着国内和国际形势的发展,我国对外语人才的需求日益增加,有志于学习外语的学生和社会群体的人数急剧上升,从而使我国外语教学事业蓬勃发展。在这种形势下,外语师资培训和自身建设的重要性与日俱增。在这两方面,当务之急是要了解当今国外外语教学的发展情况,要借鉴国外的最新经验,结合我国的具体情况,大力提高外语师资的水平,使我们的外语教学事业更上一层楼。

有鉴于此,上海外语教育出版社为广大外语教师提供了一套由国外引进的外语教学法丛书。这套丛书所涉及的方面广、种类多,包括外语教学技巧和原则、语法教学、语音教学、阅读教学、写作教学、教学管理、测试、教材选择、第一语言和第二语言习得、儿童英语教学等等。其中绝大多数专著是上世纪九十年代和本世纪所出版。它们反映了当今国外外语教学法研究及相关学科的现状。

这套丛书的最大共同特点,也是与传统教学法类专著的最大不同点在于特别强调理论与实践相结合;更是以实践为主,再以理论去分析评述各种实践活动的优缺点。我们所熟悉的传统教学法类专著,一般都是强调教学原则、教学理论,把各种方法的来龙去脉讲得很详尽;然而如何到课堂上去进行具体教学活动,如何在教学活动中去体现教学原则却不多见。这套丛书则几乎全部是从实践活动着手,以说明对理论和原则的应用。

试举两个例证:

一、斯克里温纳:《学习教学:英语教师指南》,麦克米伦海涅曼出版社,1994。(Jim Scrivener: *Learning Teaching: A Guidebook for English Language Teachers*. Macmillan Heinemann, 1994)

作者前言：“本书旨在帮助你去学习如何更有效地进行教学。它并不给你某一种正确的教学方法。实际上没有任何科学根据可以让我们去描述一种理想的教学方法。我们只能观察教师和学生进行活动的实际，并注意哪些策略和原则更有利于教学。我们没有必要去照搬那些策略和原则，但是要意识到有哪些可能性。”“因此本书并不是告诉你‘就用这种方法’，而代之以‘这几种方法似乎都可行。’主要是由你自己决定用哪一种方法。”

本书共十二章，涉及教与学的关系、教学安排、课堂活动、语言技能等等方面，绝大部分章节都是先介绍该章内容，然后列出各种具体教学活动(tasks)，其后是对各项活动的分析评述。例如第六章“说的技能”共有四小节，即1)为什么要说；2)交际性活动；3)语言交际与流利；4)演戏和角色扮演，每节都提供各种相应的具体活动和作者对各项活动的评述。教师可以根据自己的实际情况选择其中某些活动进行课堂教学。

二、努南：《语言学习研究方法》，剑桥大学出版社，1992。  
(David Nunan; *Research Methods in Language Learning*. Cambridge University Press, 1992)

作者前言：“传统的语言教学研究方法是教老师怎样去进行教学的。作者主观愿望就是对教学作出种种硬性规定。这种教学科研基于逻辑推理，并要求教学人员接受采纳。上世纪八十年代以来情况有了变化，如今教学人员对自身进行科研。他们用实验方法对教学进行探索。这种科研由于教学背景不同而不同。教学人员不再依赖已有科研成果，而是对自己的课堂教学采取一种科研态度。本书目的在于1.促使教学人员认识对自身进行科研的必要性。2.帮助教学人员进行教学方面的科研。”

本书共十章，介绍科研方法的历史背景、实验性科研方法、个案研究、课堂现场观察和科研、自省方法、语言交流分析等等。试以第六章“自省方法”为例。所谓“自省”，就是不仅仅着眼于课堂上的教学实践，而要更进一步去思考教学步骤。教学人员一方面审视自己的教学，一方面回顾课堂教学的具体步骤并提出问题进行研究。这种科研的基础就是教学人员本人的日记、教学日记和其他种种有关

记录,以这些资料为依据进行分析研究,得出结论。

以上两书的内容安排大体上可以概括整套丛书的全貌。换言之,各书的最大特点就是以实践为主,而实践都来自相应的理论并与理论密切结合;其实用性强,可操作性强。有大量的实践举例,还有不少个案研究(case study),在其后多数有分析评述。这些例证分析、评述给予教师很大的空间去进行思考、探索。各种例证并不是仅仅给教师提供方便,让教师有所参考。更重要的是促使教师结合自己的具体教学情况,通过思考和探索有所发展,制订出切合自己需要并切实可行的教学方法去进行教学。

我相信这套丛书能为促进我国外语教学事业的进一步发展作出巨大的贡献。

李观仪

2002年6月

## 出版前言

随着我国改革开放的深入和进入世界贸易组织的需要,英语教学在国内有了进一步的发展,对英语教师的需求量日益增大。为了培养一大批高素质的英语教师,必须有组织地开展师资培训工作。在职的英语教师也必须继续充电,通过种种途径进一步提高业务水平。然而,许久以来,系统介绍英语教学法的专著极为匮乏。因此,上海外语教育出版社特地从国外知名出版社,如牛津大学出版社、剑桥大学出版社和麦克米伦出版社引进一批有关外语教学法和第二语言习得研究的学术专著,出版了外语教学法丛书。《词汇教学技巧》(*Techniques in Teaching Vocabulary*)就是其中的一本。

本书主要探讨非母语英语课程中词汇教学的教学技巧。作者艾伦教授(V. F. Allen)以多年来英语教学的成功经验为依据,对词汇教学技巧作了详细阐述,并提供了丰富的例证与课堂活动建议,使本书内容与课堂教学紧密联系,具有很强的实用性。

全书共十章。第一章回顾了词汇教学地位的变迁。作者指出,词汇教学是英语教学中的重要环节,但是由于种种原因,词汇教学一度受到忽视。近年来,由于教学需要和理论研究的深入,词汇教学重新获得重视,成为语言学研究 and 语言教学的重点之一。

第二至第九章可分为三个部分。第一部分(第二章至第四章)讨论对初学者的词汇教学。作者提出此阶段词汇教学应注重词义理解及其交际作用,使学习者在交际需求的引导下自觉地习得词汇。

第二部分(第五章至第七章)探讨针对中等程度学习者的词汇教学。中级词汇教学为初级词汇教学的延续,继续要求有良好的交际语境。作者同时指出,此阶段学生之间程度差异日益明显,词汇教学应当因材施教,而且教师应注意传授词汇在目标语中的社会涵义。

第八、九两章为第三部分,着重分析针对高级程度学习者的词汇教学。这一阶段的词汇教学重点是培养学生独立学习词汇的能力。作者从词典使用和构词法的学习等方面对高级词汇教学进行探讨,并进一步强调“学以致用”的交际方法,建议以学生作文、书信、墙报等活动方式巩固所学词汇,以收到良好效果。

书末附有A至F六个附录,提供了大量课堂教学参考材料,如简易图片、实用形容词、名词和动词词表、与以英语为母语者交流的话题、填字游戏,以及托福考试样题等,具有较高的参考价值。

本书对各阶段词汇教学作了详尽的分析与阐述,展示了贴切的实例,设计了生动有趣的课堂活动,内容丰富,可读性强,更具有实用价值,为各级英语教师及英语爱好者提供了一本不可多得的参考书,也可作为英语专业高年级本科生和研究生的参考图书。



## · EDITORS' PREFACE ·

It has been apparent for some time that little attention has been given to the needs of practicing and student teachers of English as a Second Language.\* Although numerous inservice and preservice teacher-training programs are offered throughout the world, these often suffer from lack of appropriate instructional materials. Seldom are books written that present practical information that relates directly to daily classroom instruction. What teachers want are useful ideas, suggestions, demonstrations, and examples of teaching techniques that have proven successful in the classroom—techniques that are consistent with established theoretical principles and that others in our profession have found to be expedient, practical, and relevant to real-life circumstances in which most teachers work.

It was in recognition of this need that we began our search for scholars in our field who had distinguished themselves in particular instructional aspects of second language teaching. We sought out those who had been especially successful in communicating to their colleagues the characteristics of language teaching and testing techniques that have been found to be appropriate for students from elementary school through college and adult education programs. We also sought in those same scholars evidence of

\*In this volume, and in others in the series, we have chosen to use *English as a Second Language (ESL)* to refer to English teaching in the United States (as a second language) as well as English teaching in other countries (as a foreign language).

an awareness and understanding of current theories of language learning together with the ability to translate the essence of a theory into practical applications for the classroom.

Our search has been successful. For this volume, as well as for others in this series, we have chosen a colleague who is extraordinarily competent and exceedingly willing to share with practicing teachers the considerable knowledge that she has gained from many years of experience in many parts of the world.

Professor Allen's book is devoted entirely to the presentation and exemplification of practical techniques in the teaching of vocabulary. Each chapter of her book contains, in addition to detailed consideration of a wide variety of techniques, a number of activities that teachers can perform that tie the content of the book directly to the teachers' responsibilities in their classes. With this volume then, a critical need in the language teaching field has been met.

We are extremely pleased to join with the authors in this series and with Oxford University Press in making these books available to our fellow teachers. We are confident that the books will enable language teachers around the world to increase their effectiveness while at the same time making their task an easier and more enjoyable one.

*Russell N. Campbell*  
*William E. Rutherford*

**Editors' Note:** Apologies are made for the generalized use of the masculine pronoun. It is meant to be used for simplicity's sake, rather than to indicate a philosophical viewpoint. We feel that the *s/he*, *her/him*, *his/her* forms, while they may be philosophically appealing, are confusing.

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# **· CHAPTER ONE ·**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Experienced teachers of English as a Second Language know very well how important vocabulary is. They know students must learn thousands of words that speakers and writers of English use. Fortunately, the need for vocabulary is one point on which teachers and students agree!

For many years, however, programs that prepared language teachers gave little attention to techniques for helping students learn vocabulary. Some books appeared to be telling teachers that students could learn all the words they needed without help. In fact, teachers were sometimes told that they ought *not* to teach many words before their students had mastered the grammar and the sound system of the language. In journal articles for teachers, vocabulary was seldom mentioned. Pronunciation and grammar were emphasized, but there was little or no emphasis on vocabulary. In short, vocabulary has been neglected in programs for teachers during much of the twentieth century. Perhaps we should try to understand why this is so.

### **REASONS FOR NEGLECTING VOCABULARY IN THE PAST**

One reason why vocabulary was neglected in teacher-preparation programs during the period 1940–1970 was that it had been emphasized too much in language classrooms during the years before that time. Indeed, some people had believed it was the only key to

language learning. Learners often believed that all they needed was a large number of words. They thought they could master the language by learning a certain number of English words, along with the meanings of those words in their own language. Of course this belief was wrong. In addition to knowing English words and their meanings, one must know also how the words work together in English sentences. That is one reason for the emphasis upon grammar in teacher-preparation programs during the past few decades. During those years, teachers were told a great deal about new discoveries in English grammar. They heard much less about ways to help students learn words.

There is a second reason why so little was said in methodology courses about teaching words and their meanings. Some specialists in methodology seemed to believe that the meanings of words could not be adequately taught, so it was better not to try to teach them. In the 1950s, many people began to notice that vocabulary learning is not a simple matter. It is not simply a matter of learning that a certain word in one language means the same as a word in another language. Much more needs to be learned; and there were those who felt the complexities were too great to be dealt with in class.

According to an English/Spanish dictionary, for example, the words **garden** and **jardín** seem to have the same meaning. Each means a place where flowers are grown. But there are meanings of **garden** that do not correspond to the meanings of **jardín**. A garden is a place that may grow vegetables as well as flowers; whereas vegetables are grown in a **huerta** in Spanish, not in a **jardín**. This is just one of countless possible examples to show that vocabulary learning is not simply a matter of matching up words in the native language and the target language. Often those who prepared teachers gave the impression that vocabulary learning was so complex that one might better devote most of the class time to teaching the grammatical structures, with just a few vocabulary words, since students could not be given full and accurate understanding of word meanings in class. Indeed in some books and articles about language teaching, writers gave the impression that it was better not to teach vocabulary at all.

These, then, were some of the reasons for the general neglect

of vocabulary in programs that prepared teachers—during a time when teachers were getting a good deal of help with other aspects of language instruction. We will summarize the reasons here:

1. Many who prepared teachers felt that grammar should be emphasized more than vocabulary, because vocabulary was already being given too much time in language classrooms.
2. Specialists in methodology feared students would make mistakes in sentence construction if too many words were learned before the basic grammar had been mastered. Consequently, teachers were led to believe it was best *not* to teach much vocabulary.
3. Some who gave advice to teachers seemed to be saying that word meanings can be learned *only* through experience, that they cannot be adequately taught in a classroom. As a result, little attention was directed to techniques for vocabulary teaching.

Each of those beliefs about vocabulary is true to a certain extent. It is true that too much time has been devoted to vocabulary in many classrooms. Often so much time goes into explaining the new words that there seems to be no time for anything else. That, of course, is unfortunate. Students who do not learn grammar along with vocabulary will not be able to use the language for communication. Even material in which all the words look familiar may be impossible to understand if the grammatical constructions have not been learned. The following paragraphs, for instance, contain very easy vocabulary; yet the meanings of the sentences cannot be grasped without a substantial knowledge of grammar:

Things always know when a person isn't well.  
They know, but they just don't care. Many times, in  
little ways, things make life hard for people. They have  
special ways of doing this.

When I'm not well, I can never find the things I  
need. The things I need have gone away from all the  
places where I look. That is one of the facts I have  
learned about people and things.

In classes where too little time is spent on grammar, students fail to learn how words are used in sentences; only the *general meaning* of a word is learned. Students learning the words **emphasize** and **emphasis**, for example, need more than an understanding of the area of meaning which those words represent. They should learn that **emphasis** is a noun, used like this, "We put **emphasis** on it." They should learn that **emphasize** is a verb, used like this, "We **emphasize** it." The noun use should be contrasted with the verb use, as follows:

There was not much **emphasis** on it. (Note the use of **on**.)  
Few people **emphasized** it. (Note that **on** is not used.)

It is true, then, that students must learn grammar, which involves *uses* of words. It is never enough to learn only the words and their meanings. It is true that in some classrooms sentence construction has been given too little attention. It is also true that students will make mistakes if they learn the meanings of many words without learning how to put words together in sentences.

Furthermore, there is truth in the belief that experience is the best vocabulary teacher. Through experience with situations in which a language is used by speakers or writers, we learn that many of the meanings of a word do not correspond to the meanings of its so-called equivalent in another language. Since full understanding of a word often requires knowing how native speakers feel about what the word represents, some meanings cannot be found in a dictionary. It is necessary to know something about the customs and attitudes of native speakers if we are to know what words really mean to them.

Take the word **wall**, for instance. Every language has a word for the thing that English calls a wall. But how people feel about walls can be very different in different parts of the world, and those feelings are part of the meaning of the word. Suppose someone says, "Our new neighbors have built a wall around their property." In many countries, that statement would not surprise anyone. In those countries, it is customary to build a wall around one's property; most people do so. In most English-speaking com-

munities, however, houses and gardens are usually visible from the street. To the native speaker of English, the building of the wall might suggest unfriendliness.

As we have seen, then, the learning of word meanings requires more than the use of a dictionary, and vocabulary acquisition is a complex process. Fortunately, however, teachers are being given more help with vocabulary teaching today.

## **REASONS FOR THE PRESENT EMPHASIS ON VOCABULARY**

In teacher-preparation programs today, there is more attention to techniques for teaching vocabulary. One reason is this: In many ESL classes, even where teachers have devoted much time to vocabulary teaching, the results have been disappointing. Sometimes—after months or even years of English—many of the words most needed have never been learned. Especially in countries where English is not the main language of communication, many teachers want more help with vocabulary instruction than they used to receive.

Something else also accounts for today's concern with the learning of vocabulary. That is the fact that scholars are taking a new interest in the study of word meanings. A number of research studies have recently dealt with lexical problems (problems related to words). Through research the scholars are finding that lexical problems frequently interfere with communication; communication breaks down when people do not use the right words.

Such discoveries by scholars do not surprise classroom teachers. Teachers have never doubted the value of learning vocabulary. They know how communication stops when learners lack the necessary words. They do not believe that the teaching of vocabulary should be delayed until the grammar is mastered. In the best classes, neither grammar nor vocabulary is neglected. There is thus no conflict between developing a firm command of grammar and learning the most essential words.

Today, therefore, professional journals and teachers' meetings often reflect the current concern for more effective vocabulary



teaching. When teachers come together for professional discussions, they raise such questions as these:

- Which English words do students need most to learn?
- How can we make those words seem important to students?
- How can so many needed words be taught during the short time our students have for English?
- What can we do when a few members of the class already know words that the others need to learn?
- Why are some words easier than others to learn?
- Which aids to vocabulary teaching are available?
- How can we encourage students to take more responsibility for their own vocabulary learning?
- What are some good ways to find out how much vocabulary the students have actually learned?

Answers to these and other questions will be found in the chapters that follow. The answers are based on the experience of teachers—teachers working in classrooms in many parts of the world.

If you and other teachers are using the book together, you will want to discuss the suggestions that the chapters offer. A major aim is to help experienced teachers recall successful techniques which they can share with colleagues newer to the field of ESL.

Whether or not you have had much teaching experience, you know a great deal about vocabulary learning. In your own study of other languages, you have discovered much about the learning of words. As you work through the activities proposed in each chapter, you will build on what you already know.