

Vocabulary

Reflection Statement

Vocabulary is often neglected in the classroom. We as language teachers assume that our students will learn the vocabulary at home. We have to stress the importance of vocabulary for language learning in the classroom, if we expect our students to learn it. As Professor Guilloteau, pointed out in her lecture: "Speakers need to know spelling, pronunciation, the grammatical behavior of a word, and how it's meaning changes in varying contexts in order to communicate effectively through different communication modes." Since vocabulary items have to be repeated approximately five to sixteen times before they are remembered it is crucial that we as language teachers use new vocabulary extensively and practice with our students. But before we use new vocabulary it needs to be introduced. I started using the vocabulary unit concepts which is used in the French department at UT. My students loved the activity - especially the "What word does not fit." They even asked me if we could do them more often since they really enjoyed it. I also introduced similar activities, just in a different format to mix it up a little. Since I started use this approach to introduce vocabulary I saw an improvement in my students grades on vocabulary quizzes and in-class activities as well as oral production.

Teaching Portfolio - Language Teaching Materials - Vocabulary

ASSIGNMENT TOPIC: Vocabulary in the Classroom

Level of language: for all levels

Goal: practice/ review vocabulary

The vocabulary games introduced here can be used in all levels. They can be used to practice new vocabulary items and/or review previously learned vocabulary.

The documents on this page include a handout for students which provides them instructions for studying vocabulary at home. In addition, the handout called "Vocabulary Games" gives some suggestions for games that can be played in class to practice and/or review vocabulary.

Vocabulary

The activities described below are taken from the course book of the French Department at UT.

Students are asked to do the following things in preparation for the next class day:

1. Listen to the new vocabulary and pronounce it aloud until you pronounce it correctly (Write down vocabulary that is hard to pronounce)
2. Write each word multiple times until you can spell it correctly
3. Write the words in categories (a) grammatical, b) thematic)
4. Write down 5 words that you think are hard, funny, interesting, etc.
5. Create a "What word does not fit?" activity. Provide the answer and a reason for why the word does not fit.

Example: der Hund - die Katze - der Hamster - die Hose

Die Hose (Weil Hose ein Kleidungsstück ist. Hund, Katze und Hamster sind Tiere).

This can be given as homework for different topics within the chapter so students are not overwhelmed.

Other possibilities are to ask students to bring pictures for their vocabulary items, have them write definitions and play some kind of Jeopardy in class.

At the beginning of the next class the students work in groups and discuss what vocabulary items they thought were hard, funny, etc. The next step is their "What does not fit" activities. First they discuss and solve them in their groups (usually 4 students) and afterwards a couple of them are reviewed with the entire class.

Vocabulary Games

Below is a list with some vocabulary "games" that can be used in the foreign language classroom to practice new vocabulary or review previously learned vocabulary. All those games can be played as class, in groups or pairs:

1. "What word does not fit?"

Students choose 4 words (one of which does not fit) and they also provide a reason why it does not fit.

Example: dog - cat - hamster - ~~pants~~ (pants => clothing all other words are animals)

2. Hangman

Students tell the other students how many letters are in this word and if it is a noun, adjective, verb, etc. They also tell them the overall topic e.g. animal, building, etc.

3. "Word-Chain"

The teacher gives a category e.g. fruit and vegetable. One student starts the chain by saying a word from this category. The next student has to say a word that starts with the last letter of this previous word.

Example: apple - eggplant - tomato - orange - etc.

4. Packing your luggage ("Ich packe meinen Koffer...")

This is great for clothing items, talking about traveling, but it can also be used for furniture and other vocabulary categories.

Furniture: I move, and pack my.....

Vegetables, Fruit: I go shopping and buy....

etc.

One student starts by saying "I am packing for my trip and I take my....

(name of clothing for example). The next student has to say the same phrase, say the word the previous student said and provide his/her word.

The next student has to repeat all the previous words and provide his/her own word, etc.

Vocabulary Games

5. "Speedwords"

Students have to come up with for example the opposite, a synonym, the noun (if they are given a verb), etc.

The teacher can provide the words or students can think about them for homework and then test each other.

Example: female/male: (provided word) boyfriend => girlfriend
opposites: (provided word) fast => slow

6. Stadt, Land, Fluss (City, Country, River)

This is a well known game in Germany. It is played in a group. One person says the letter A out loud and then goes through the alphabet silently. Another student has to say stop at some point and the student going through the alphabet says the letter he/she is currently at out loud. Now every person in the group has to write down a city, country and river that starts with this letter. The student who is done first says "finished" out loud and every one has to stop writing. Points are given for every word. This can be altered for different vocabulary topics e.g. fruit, clothing, furniture, jobs, etc.

7. Buchstabensalat (Letter salad)

For this game dice with letters are necessary (or the letters are written on paper and drawn out of a box) - a doc cam is necessary to show all the letters to class.

The letters are mixed and then put on the doc cam. Students have to write down as many words as they can think of with the letters provided.

Note:

There are thousands of games that we can utilize for the foreign language classroom. Just think back to your childhood and use them.