

Techniques for Presenting Vocabulary in Maritime English Teaching

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Abstract: *Specialist vocabulary is one of the most difficult parts in teaching English for specific purposes. This paper puts forward eight maritime vocabulary teaching techniques, including realia, drawing, word-building, guessing from context, demonstrating, synonyms, diagrams and examples and their usages in maritime English teaching.*

Keywords: *vocabulary, technique, maritime English teaching*

1. Introduction

Specialist vocabulary is one of the main differences between teaching English for General Purposes and English for Specific Purposes. While it is crucial to teach specialist maritime vocabulary, this needs to be balanced with other areas of language systems and skills practice ^[1].

Teaching vocabulary is not just a case of having the students write or repeat lists of isolated words. “Knowing” a word is like being able to “use” grammar. The student needs to understand the context of the new item, to be able to produce the word accurately, and to differentiate between “specialist” and “general” meanings of words which can be used in a several contexts ^[2].

It is best to teach new words in English as translations often do not have a direct parallel in other languages which can be very confusing for beginners. Persistent translation hinders the ability to “think in English” and does not give students much chance to develop an understanding of English collocation.

2. Teaching techniques

There are several effective techniques in helping students understand and remember the meaning of new words.

2.1 Realia

Show real objects to your students.

Example:

The topic of the lesson is onboard maintenance. The teacher brings the following tools into class and shows them to the students, eg spanner, chisel, hammer, pliers.

She shows each tool and says its name a few times before asking the students to repeat it. Next she shows the tool and asks individual students for its name.

2.2 Drawing

Draw the new vocabulary items on the board.

Example:

The teacher introduces a new word or phrase, for example “immersion suit”, and sketches it on the board. Then the teacher asks “is this the same as a wet suit?”, “what is the difference?”, “when would you need an immersion suit?”

2.3 Word-building

Use parts of words to help students build words or guess their meaning.

Example:

We can change the meaning of some adjectives to opposites by using a prefix. Add the prefix un-, in-, im- and ir- to these adjectives: reliable, accurate, patient, relevant, sociable. Use a dictionary to check your answers and note the change in the meaning.

2.4 Guessing from context

Try to guess the possible meaning of new words from the whole sentence and from the sentences that come before and after.

Example: Guess the meaning of the underlined words.

In the early hours of the morning a fire broke out in the engine room of a general cargo ship. A ship's fire party was organized, donned breathing apparatus and attempted to extinguish the fire which was adjacent to the fuel oil heater. Several attempts were made during the next two hours to extinguish the fire, first with portable foam and dry chemical extinguishers, then with a fire hose before the decision was made to flood the engine room with co2. Prior to the flooding, the fire had spread to a workshop located one deck above the fuel oil heaters.

2.5 Demonstrating

Mime or act out new words.

Example:

The teacher introduces new words by saying them as he mimes them, eg painting, shouting, sweeping, lifting. Then the class students mime the words while they say them.

2.6 Synonyms

Use the words the students already know to teach them similar words.

Example:

Read the text below. Find the words in the text with meanings similar to the following words: put out, tried, before, started, equipment.

In the early hours of the morning a fire broke out in the engine room of a general cargo ship. A ship's fire party was organized, donned breathing apparatus and attempted to extinguish the fire which was adjacent to the fuel oil heater. Several attempts were made during the next two hours to extinguish the fire, first with portable foam and dry chemical extinguishers, then with a fire hose before the decision was made to flood the engine room with co2. Prior to the flooding, the fire had spread to a workshop located one deck above the fuel oil heaters.

2.7 Diagrams

Use a diagram to represent new words.

Example:

Students find out the meaning of several new words from the labels on a diagram.

2.8 Examples

Give a definition in English of the word you want to introduce, followed by examples.

Example:

The teacher wants introduce the word cargo. She explains that cargo means "the goods carried on a ship" and gives examples of two types of cargo: bulk cargo such as grain, coal, copra; and general cargo such as paper, wool, rope, coffee, flour, cement. The teacher then asks the students to give more

examples of cargoes.

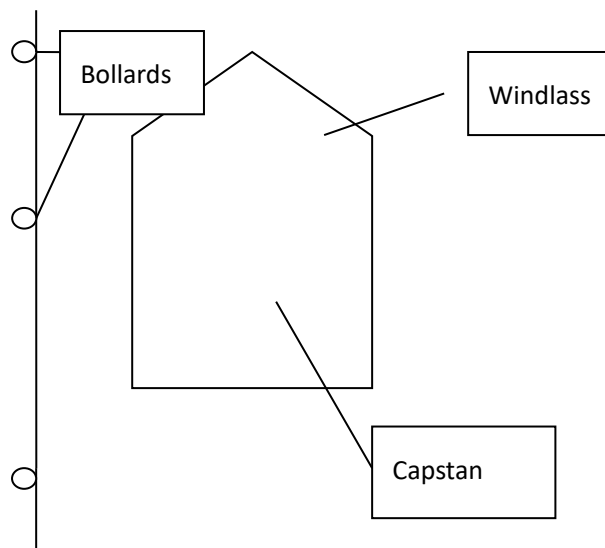


Figure 1: how diagram works in teaching specialist vocabulary

3. Concept checking

Presenting new vocabulary to students should include “concept checking”. This means making sure that students are clear about the meaning of a new vocabulary item which teachers have presented ^[3].

Examples:

A teacher wants to present the verb to float to a group of elementary level students. He demonstrates by putting a cork and then a leaf into a glass of water, saying “this floats”. He contrasts this with a coin, saying “this does not float”. Then the teacher checks quickly to see that the students understand the new word by showing them pictures of other objects. They say which items do/do not float.

A teacher presents the word corrosion to a group of intermediate level students by explaining that corrosion is the process that occurs when metal deteriorates because of a chemical reaction to its environment ^[4]. She gives the example of rust on ships and then shows pictures of corroded metal from a magazine. To check that the students understand the meaning, she asks the students “does corrosion affect plastic?”, “what are some causes of corrosion?”, “what type of items could corrode?”, “how can corrosion be prevented?”

When planning how to teach new words, the teacher must be aware of the differences between teaching and testing. Presentation of new input requires teaching whereas revision may involve some testing. A labeling exercise would not be appropriate as the students would not understand the new words. Instead, the teacher would need to present the new words to the students, establishing the meaning clearly ^[5].

The presentation of new vocabulary should be followed up immediately with controlled practice. This should not involve asking students to “make sentences with new words” on their own as this is not an activity which native speakers would do and can be daunting for the students. Controlled practice should let the students use the new words for communicative purposes within clear contexts. This allows the teacher to check the students’ understanding of the items and helps the learner consolidate the meaning of the new word, making it more likely that it will enter his active vocabulary store, in the short-term at least.

4. Conclusion

Specialist vocabulary is important for the development of students’ professional English abilities and it is advisable for teacher to employ appropriate teaching techniques to teach different specialist vocabulary to maintain students’ interest and improve teaching effect. With the rapid of information technology, new teaching techniques may appear, such as VR teaching to allow students to learn while experiencing.

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