SEMIOTIC ELEMENTS AND DIFFICULTIES IN TEACHING VOCABULARY ITEMS

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Abstract

This paper aims at emphasizing the importance of semiotic elements and difficulties in teaching vocabulary items. It summarizes the background of vocabulary teaching, lists vocabulary teaching techniques proposed by various researchers and expounds semiotic elements and difficulties in teaching color names, idioms, onomatopoeic words and compound words. Moreover, semiotics as one of the most effective ways of teaching culture, the role of semiotic elements in vocabulary learning and teaching, problems caused by being unfamiliar with the cultural semiotics of the target language, the use of semiotic elements in literature and the role of the language teacher in a vocabulary lesson are taken into account.

Keywords: *Semiotics, Vocabulary Teaching, Foreign Language Teaching, Cultural Semiotics*

(İMBİLİMSEL ÖĞELER VE SÖZCÜK ÖĞRETİMİNDEKİ ZORLUKLAR)

Özet

Bu çalışma sözcük öğretimindeki imbilimsel öğelerin önemini ve zorlukları vurgulamayı amaçlamaktadır. Sözcük öğretiminin geçmişini özetlemekte, farklı araştırmacılar tarafından önerilen sözcük öğretim tekniklerini listelemekte ve imbilimsel öğeler ve renk isimleri, deyimler, yansımalı sözcükler ve bileşik sözcüklerin öğretimindeki zorlukları açıklamaktadır. Üstelik, kültür öğretiminin en etkili yollarından biri olarak imbilim, sözcük öğrenimi ve öğretiminde imbilimsel öğelerin rolü, amaç dilin kültürel imbilimiyle tanışık olmamadan kaynaklanan sorunlar, edebiyatta imbilimsel öğelerin kullanımı ve sözcükbilgisi dersinde öğretmenin rolü ele alınmaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: *İmbilim, Sözcük Öğretimi, Yabancı Dil Öğretimi, Kültürel İmbilim.*

1. Introduction

It is a fact that teaching vocabulary is a significant factor in language teaching. Since words play an important role in expressing our feelings, emotions, and ideas to others during the act of communication, foreign language teachers should attribute importance to teaching vocabulary in their classes. It is evident that communication is a mutual relationship between the speaker / writer and the hearer / reader. The hearer / reader should comprehend what he hears or reads in the target language. Unless he has sufficient knowledge of vocabulary, he cannot decode the message sent by the speaker or writer. It follows from this that vocabulary is of great importance for real communication to take place. As for semiotics, it is the study of all communication phenomena arising from and by way of signs. There are two central concerns of semiotics. First, it deals with the relationship between the sign and its meaning. Second, semiotics studies the way by which signs are combined through following certain rules, or codes (Kim 1996:3). According to Sebeok (1991:60), the subject matter of semiotics is the exchange of any messages whatever and of the system of signs which underlie them. Since its concerns include considerations of how messages are successively generated, encoded, transmitted, decoded and interpreted, and how this entire transaction is worked upon by the context, it is closely related with vocabulary teaching. This paper provides the background of vocabulary teaching, outlines vocabulary teaching techniques presented by several researchers and stresses the importance of semiotic elements and difficulties in teaching vocabulary items. In the last section, it takes into account semiotics as the most effective way of teaching culture, the role of semiotic elements in vocabulary learning, problems caused by being unfamiliar with the cultural semiotics of the target language, the use of semiotic elements in literature and the role of the language teacher in a vocabulary lesson.

2. Background of Vocabulary Teaching

In the early decades of the 20th century, vocabulary teaching and research were respectable. The Grammar Translation Method and the Reading Approach were the leading language teaching methodologies at that time. Both of these approaches involved a great deal of direct vocabulary teaching and learning (Murcia 1991:296). The Grammar Translation Method aimed to provide the student with a detailed literary vocabulary which is learned through long lists of translated items and a bilingual dictionary and practiced through sentence translation with little opportunity to try out pronunciation (Rivers 1981:28-30). The Reading Approach attached more importance to vocabulary than grammatical skills. The vocabulary of the early readings was strictly controlled. Since the acquisition of vocabulary was regarded more prominent than the mastery of grammatical skills, expanding vocabulary as fast as possible was of great importance (Celce-Murcia and Prator 1979:3).

The Reform Movement, which was set up as a reaction to the Grammar Translation Method, stressed the primacy of spoken language and the presentation of the written word only after the spoken form had been provided. It was emphasized that new vocabulary should only be met in sentences and meaningful contexts (Richards and Rodgers 2001:10).

The Direct Method, which grew out of the Reform Movement, made emphasis on interaction for language acquisition and acquiring an acceptable pronunciation from the beginning. It introduced vocabulary through classroom objects, mime, drawings and explanations (Rivers 1981:32-33), or even texts supplemented by pictures (Robin and Bergeaud, 1941).

The Oral Approach and Situational Language Teaching were British structuralist approaches to language teaching developed between the 1930's and the 1960's (Richards and Rodgers 2001:39). In the Oral Approach, grammar and vocabulary was carefully chosen and graded. This ultimately led to the Vocabulary Control Movement and West's 'A General Service List of English Words' 1953, which had a permanent effect on the grading of vocabulary (Schmitt 2000:15, Zimmerman 1997:9). In Situational Language Teaching, the meaning of words was not to be given via explanation in either the mother tongue or the target language but was to be induced from the way the form was used in a situation. The learner was expected to deduce the meaning of a particular vocabulary item from the situation in which it was presented. The meaning of new words was not conveyed through translation. It was made clear visually with objects, pictures, action and mime (Richards and Rodgers 2001:36-38).

The Audiolingual Method was shaped after the Second World War when the need for foreign language speakers was better appreciated. In this method, the amount of vocabulary presented was kept low (Thornbury 2002:14) and was chosen for its simplicity (Schmitt 2000:13). It was assumed that, when grammatical fluency was present, exposure to the foreign language itself lead to vocabulary development (Coady 1993:4). It was also stressed that knowing too much vocabulary would cause students to have a false sense of security (Zimmerman 1997:11).

The Cognitive Approach, which emerged as a reaction against the defects of the Audiolingual Approach and its behavioristic features at the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s, took as its theoretical base the Transformational-Generative Grammar of Chomsky (Stern 1991:169). In this approach, the acquisition of an adequate vocabulary was crucial for successful second language use. Students could not use the structures and functions during the act of communication without having sufficient amount of vocabulary. In a cognitive class, the language teacher had to move

from competence to performance. To put it another way, he was expected to follow the presentation, practice and the application stages. To teach the meanings of the lexical items, techniques like contextualization, demonstrations, drawings, real objects, flashcards, OHP, etc. were used to a great extent. Moreover, synonyms, antonyms, hyponyms, collocations, cognates and semantic fields, etc. were also utilized by language teachers (Şenel 2002:161).

The Communicative Approach is a renowned British Approach to language teaching the emergence of which dates back to the mid-1960s. Especially, British applied linguists like Henry Widdowson, M.A.K. Halliday, C. Brumfit, K. Johnson, and D.A. Wilkins leaded to this communicative movement, advocating that communicative proficiency and functions of language should be emphasized over the mastery of structures (Duman 1997:22). Dell Hymes stressed the need to teach communicative competence (i.e. the ability to use the target linguistic system effectively and appropriately). Concepts like context, use, effective communication, communicative function, comprehensible pronunciation, etc. were given importance in this approach. Şenel (2002:243-4) emphasized that new words were not presented in isolation, but in the context of a complete sentence, and in a meaningful situation. This way, the words acquired meaning when they appeared with a particular definition in a determined context. Moreover, Thornbury (2002:14) stated that coursebooks began to incorporate communicative activities specifically targeting vocabulary since the meaning-giving role of lexis was recognized in this approach.

The Lexical Approach was developed by Michael Lewis in 1993. This approach stresses the importance of vocabulary as being basic to communication. It is claimed that if learners do not recognize the meaning of keywords, they will be unable to participate in the conversation, even if they know the morphology and the syntax of the foreign language. However, Lewis states that the Lexical Approach is not simply a shift of emphasis from grammar to vocabulary teaching since 'language consists not of traditional grammar and vocabulary, but often of multi-word prefabricated chunks.' (Lewis 1997:7). Hence, lexical Approach emphasizes language as prefabricated chunks that the learner can take and use to promote fluency: collocations, phrasal verbs, idioms, catchphrases, sayings, sentence frames, social formulae and discourse markers being the most significant chunks for the foreign language learner (Thornby 2002:115). This approach has influenced coursebooks and dictionaries. It is simply due to this reason that many coursebooks and dictionaries incorporate collocational exercises and information in our times.

In recent years, Content-based Instruction has gained popularity in foreign language learning and teaching. This approach has been utilized in immersion

programs, teaching languages for specific purposes, and for teaching all levels of proficiency. In this approach, vocabulary is completely contextualized and courses which have carefully designed the scope and the spiralling sequence of the content manage to recycle both the content and the associated vocabulary. Many language programs also choose content to conform to the knowledge students already possess and texts may either be authentic or specially written (Stryker and Leaver 1997:291).

3. Techniques in Presenting New Vocabulary

According to Ur 1996:63, there are different ways of presenting new vocabulary. In the following , different techniques of presenting the meaning of new vocabulary are shown:

- *concise definition*
- *detailed description (of appearance, qualities...)*
- *examples (hyponyms)*
- *illustration (picture, object)*
- *demonstration (acting, mime)*
- *context (story or sentence in which the item occurs)*
- *synonym*
- *opposite(s) (antonyms)*
- *translation*
- *associated ideas, collocations*

Murcia 1991:301-302 lists different techniques used in presenting new vocabulary as follows:

- *Visual Aids (Pictures, Objects)*
- *Word Relations (Synonyms, Antonyms)*
- *Pictorial Schemata (Venn diagrams, grids,tree diagrams, or stepped scales)*
- *Definition, Explanation, Examples, and Anecdotes*
- *Context*
- *Word Roots and Affixes*

4. Semiotic Elements and Difficulties in Vocabulary Teaching

Teachers of English have difficulty in teaching vocabulary items that reflect the cultural characteristics of the English language. Since color names, proverbs, idioms,compound words, and the use of lexical items in literary texts exhibit culture specific properties, language teachers may encounter some problems in teaching these items to their students. In the following, difficulties in teaching culture-specific

vocabulary items that possess semiotic elements within their nature will be summarized:

4.1 Semiotic Elements and Difficulties in Teaching Color Names

Although color names express more or less the same meanings in many languages, they may indicate different meanings among different cultures. In the following table, various colors and their meanings across different cultures, according to Öktem (2000:59), are shown:

Color	Japanese	Latin American	Saudi Arabian	Chinese	American	Turkish
Red	Blood, sun, flag, excitement, some terror	excitement, happiness, festivals	blood, bride, royal	happiness, good things	blood, danger, communist, Indian (redskin)	flag, hot, blood
Yellow	foolishness, crazy people, unripe, pitiful	New Year's Eve	envy	--------	cheerfulness, cowardice, autumn	autumn, sickness, gold
Green	beginning, growth	spring	life	good luck, wealth, adultery	unripe, young, spring, envy, sickness	unripe, fresh, wish
Blue	sea, happiness	feeling blue	happiness, sky	purity	feeling blue, blue blood (noble)	sea
White	happiness	happiness	purity	mourning	purity, race	purity, bride
Black	formality, sadness, grief	funerals	darkness, sadness, war, loneliness	mourning	funeral, race	darkness

As seen in the above table, the meanings expressed by color names, though similar in some cases, are culture-specific, that is, the way each culture views and values the world in relation to color names is different. Since color names are related with the sense of seeing, they have a semiotic value. When learning new words or expressions related with colors, students visualize these words or expressions and try to guess the meaning, depending on the color system of their mother tongue. In some cases, they make logical guesses and understand what is meant. However, in many cases, they become unsuccessful in getting the intended meaning due to being unfamiliar with the color system of the target language. In the following, color names and related meanings will be given to show the existence of semiotic elements in vocabulary items related with color:

4.1.1 Black and Related Meanings

The word black can express a number of meanings in English. Some of the meanings expressed by the word black are as follows:

Example 1:

According to the latest sales figures, things look very black for us. 'Things are very bad or hopeless for us'

Example 2:

She gave me a black look. 'She was angry with me'

Example 3:

Our account is nicely in the black this month.

"We have money in our bank account. Our account has made money this month."

Example 4:

After the fight, he was black and blue all over.

"He had the skin darkly discolored as the result of being hit."

Example 5:

I want this agreement in black and white. 'in written form'

Example 6:

Black Death "the illness that killed large numbers of people in Europe and Asia in the 14th century."

Example 7:

Black humor 'humor dealing with the unpleasant side of human life.'

Example 8:

He was on a black list because of his sporting connections with South Africa.

"a list of people, groups, countries, etc., who are disapproved of for some reason and are to be avoided or punished in some way.'

4.1.2 White and Related Meanings

Example 9:

Her face was white with anger / fear. 'pale in color'

Example 10:

Her face was white as a sheet. 'pale with fear or illness'

Example 11:

White-collar workers 'people who work in offices or at professional jobs, rather than doing hard or dirty work with their hands'

Example 12:

They walked towards the enemy waving the <u>white flag</u> to show that they were surrendering.

'a sign that one accepts defeat'

Example 13:

He sometimes tells <u>a white lie</u> to his friends. 'a harmless lie'

4.1.3 Red and Related Meanings

Example 14:

Your account is <u>in the red</u>. 'It is in debt.'

Example 15:

Let's <u>paint the town red</u> ! 'to go out and have an extremely good time, usually to celebrate something.'

Example 16:

<u>The Red Army</u> 'the army of the USSR'

Example 17:

The hospital services have been put on <u>red alert</u>. 'a condition of readiness to deal with a situation of sudden great danger.'

Example 18:

He is a <u>red-blooded</u> person. 'confident and strong'

Example 19:

We will give him the <u>red-carpet treatment</u>.

'a special ceremonial welcome to an important guest'

Example 20:

<u>The Red Cross</u>

'a symbol for an international Christian organization that looks after sick and wounded people'

4.1.4 Yellow and Related Meanings

Example 21:

He is <u>yellow.</u>   'not brave, coward'

He is yellow-bellied.   'not brave, coward'

Example 22:

Have a look at the Yellow Pages to find out the telephone number of the company.

'a book containing the telephone numbers of firms and similar organizations in an area, divided up according to the kind of business they do.'

Example 23:

Yellow fever 'a dangerous tropical disease in which the skin turns rather yellow.'

4.1.5 Green and Related Meanings

Example 24:

She <u>turned green</u> when she smoked her first cigarette. 'to become unhealthily pale in the face because of sickness, fear, etc.

Example 25:

You are pretty <u>green</u> for a smart guy.

'young and / or inexperienced and therefore easily deceived and ready to believe anything.'

Example 26:

He was absolutely green when he saw my new Jaguar car. 'very jealous'

Example 27:

We are ready to rebuild our house; we are just waiting for the <u>green light</u> from the Council.

'a social sign indicating permission, esp. official permission, to begin an action'

4.1.6 Blue and Related Meanings

Example 28:

I am <u>feeling rather blue</u> today. 'sad and without hope; depressed'

Example 29:

Some of her jokes were a bit <u>blue.</u> 'concerned with sex; rather improper; risque'

Example 30:

You can call that dog <u>till you are blue in the face</u> but he will never come

'unsuccessfully for ever'

Example 31:

He is a <u>rugger Blue</u>. 'a representative of Oxford or Cambridge University in a sport'

Example 32:

John arrived completely <u>out of the blue</u>. 'unexpectedly'

Example 33:

Members of noble families are said to have <u>blue blood</u> in their veins.

'the quality of being a nobleman or noblewoman by birth'

4.1.7 Grey and Related Meanings

Example 34:

His face <u>turned grey</u> as he heard the bad news 'of a person's face of a pale color because of sudden fear or illness'

Example 35:

Life seems grey and joyless. 'dull'

As seen in the above examples, color names and expressions made with color names bring about problems for students of English. Colors are social signs and culture-specific. Since students do not have a well-developed sociopragmatic and sociosemiotic competence in the target language, they do not know how, when, and where to use these color names. Moreover, being unaware of the cultural semiotics of the target language also prevents students from decoding the meanings of the words in the target language.

4.2. Semiotic Elements and Difficulties in Teaching Proverbs

Proverbs are an essential and enduring part of daily speech in all societies by stating basic principles of folk wisdom and conduct. Since they are an outgrowth of common experiences, very often the precepts of one culture are the precepts of another. Each language has its own proverbs. The phrasing is unique and contributes to the color of the language. But whatever the phraseological turns, many proverbs convey similar meanings. Once the concept of the proverb is understood, students can often relate it to similar concepts in their own languages. The following proverbs can be seen in many languages (Collis 1994: ix).

Example 36:

In Unity There is Length

'a group of people with the same goals can accomplish mor than individuals can'

Example 37:

Look before You Leap 'consider all aspects of a situation before you take any action'

Example 38:

The Way to a Man's Heart is through His Stomach.

'the way to gain a man's love is by preparing food that he enjoys'

Example 39:

Don't Bite the Hand That Feeds You 'don't hurt someone who takes care of you.'

Example 40:

Don't Judge a Book by Its Cover

'don't form an opinion about something based on appearance alone'

When teaching the meanings of proverbs, language teachers can use visual materials. For example, using cartoons helps illustrate the meaning and usage of each proverb. In other words, the use of semiotic elements (i.e. using cartoons) helps students both visualize the meanings of the proverbs within their minds and accelerate the learning process in the long term memory of the students. Semiotic elements, needless to say, serve for the realization of the cognitive learning of the vocabulary items. Although some proverbs are relatively easy for students to learn, there are many proverbs that may not be easily learned by students. In such cases, using illustrations (i.e. semiotic elements), if possible, may be very helpful for students. The proverbs below can be taught by the help of cartoons easily. However, they cannot be easily taught without using visual materials:

Example 41:

Birds of a Feather Flock Together 'people of the same type seem to gather together'

Example 42:

The Squaking Wheel Gets the Oil 'those who complain the loudest get the most attention'

Example 43:

The Proof of the Pudding Is in the Eating 'the only way to judge something is to try it'

Birds of a Feather Flock Together

(people of the same type seem to gather together)

The Squeaking Wheel Gets the Oil

(those who complain the loudest get the most attention)

The Proof of the Pudding Is in the Eating

(the only way to judge something is to try it)
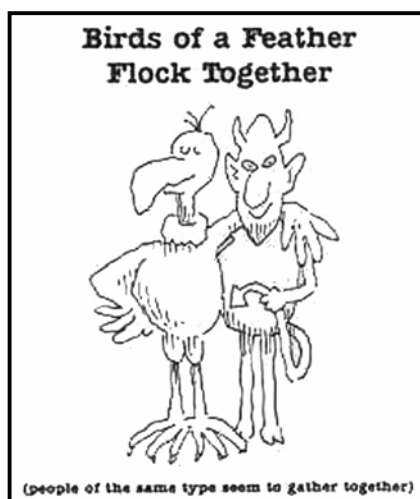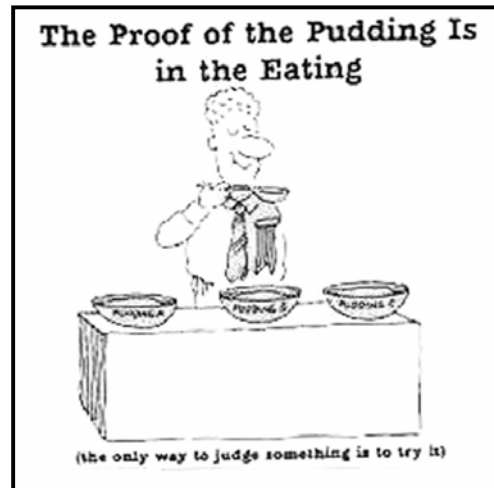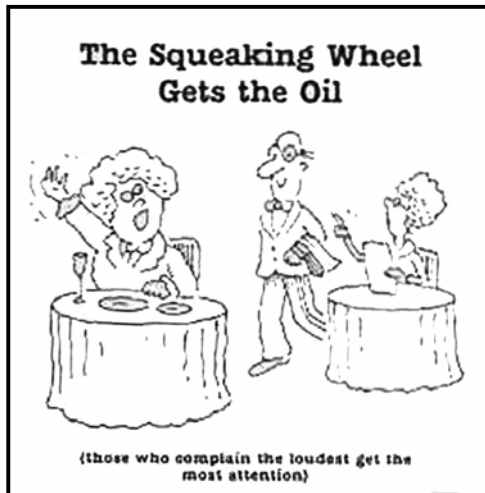
4.3 Semiotic Elements and Difficulties in Teaching Idıoms

Wallace (1988:116) states that idioms are a special form of collocation encountered by every learner. A practical definition of idiom for teaching purposes contains three elements: 1. idioms consist of more than one word; 2. idioms are fixed collocations; 3. idioms are semantically opaque. Some of the idioms with their meanings are as follows:

Let the cat out of the bag 'reveal a secret'

Lick someone's boots 'humble oneself to gain someone's favour'

Rain cats and dogs 'rain heavily'

Storm in a teacup 'fuss about something that is not really important'

Off the cuff 'not prepared beforehand'

Since the number of changes that can be made in idioms is very limited, idioms are fixed collocations. Another important thing which all idioms have in common is that they cannot be decoded from the literal or ordinary meaning of the words they contain: we can say that they are sematically opaque. The meanings of idioms, such as Let the cat out of the bag or Rain cats and dogs have no obvious connections with cats, dogs or bags. Some idioms are less opaque (i.e. more transparent) than others. For a student, it might be easier to guess the meaning of Lick someone's boots than Let the cat out of the bag. However, the amount of help the student got from the context might also be influential on guessing the meaning here.

Since many idioms bring to our mind the visual images of the things expressed, they are closely related with semiotics. Many idioms possess semiotic elements, which may help the students understand the meaning of the idioms. For example, in the English idiom Let the cat out of the bag, the cat and the bag are the semiotic elements both making students remember the visual images of the things expressed and contributing to the understanding process. Similarly, in the English idiom Storm in a teacup, storm and teacup are semiotic elements helping students visualize the meaning of the idiom within their mind. Likewise, in the idiom Lick someone's boots, boot is a semiotic element. Visualizing this semiotic element within their mind within the given context, students can easily guess the meaning of the idiom. However, in some cases, it may not be easy for students to decode the meanings of the idioms by using the semiotic elements included within the same idioms. For example, in idioms like string someone along, sell someone short and raise a stink, the semiotic elements do not provide the students with sufficient input to understand the meaning. At this juncture, it is by the help of visual input (i.e cartoons) that these proverbs can be taught easily. However, they cannot be easily taught without using visual materials:

String Someone Along

(lead someone on dishonestly)

Sell Someone Short

(underestimate someone)

Raise a Stink

(protest strongly)

4.4 Semiotic Elements and Difficulties in Teaching Onomatopoeic Words

Onomatopoeia is the imitation of sound by sound. Here, the sound is truly an echo to the sense: the referent itself is an acoustic experience which is more or less closely imitated by the phonetic structure of the word. Terms like buzz, crack, growl, hum, plop, roar, squeak, squeal, whizz are onomatopoeic words (Ullman 1979:84). Since they are related with the sense of hearing, they have semiotic value. Students of English have difficulty in understanding the meanings of these onommatopoeic words as they are used to expressing these onomatopoeic words in a different way in their own languages. The following examples show the case clearly:

The buzzing of the bees 'making a continuous low sound'

Cracking nuts 'causing to break open nuts'

Our dog always growls at strangers 'makes a deep rough sound to show anger or warning'

Humming a song 'making a contionus low sound'

The soap fell plop into the bath 'to fall with a sound like something solid drops smoothly into liquid'

The lion roared 'give a deep loudly continuing sound'

The mouse squeaked 'make a short, very high, but not loud sound'

The children squealed with delight 'make a long very high sound or cry'

Cars are whizzing 'moving very fast, often making a noisy sound as is rushing through the air'

4.5 Semiotic Elements and Difficulties in Teaching Compound Words

In many compound words in English, the existence of semiotic elements can be seen. The examples, such as shoe-maker, lambswool, fingerprint, leather-jacket, knee-deep, raincoat, mousetrap, seahorse, zebra fish, snowball, and icebag, etc. show the case clearly. However, in many compound words, the lack of semiotic elements makes it difficult for the students to understand the meanings of the compound words. The following examples show the case clearly:

willy-nilly 'regardless of whether it is wanted or not'

The new law will be passed willy-nilly so we will have to consider how it affects us.

wishy-washy 'without determination or clear aims and principles'

wishy-washy ideas

hurly-burly 'noisy activity'

The hurly-burly of city life

hanky-panky 'cheating or deceit or sexually improper behavior of a not very serious kind'

a bit of hanky-panky at the office party

nitty-gritty 'difficult and practical part of a situation'

Let's get down to the nitty-gritty: exactly how much do you intend to pay me for this?

5. Conclusion

It is a fact that foreign language teaching should pursue the goal of providing the learner not only with a linguistic, but moreover with an intercultural competence. To attain this goal, the teaching of a foreign language must also be the teaching of a foreign culture (Winfried 1996:223). In this context, it is semiotic elements which is the most effective way of teaching culture. The primary concern of vocabulary teaching is to place the meanings of the words correctly into the long term memory of the students by teaching culture. Many words possess semiotic elements. Semiotic elements provide students with a better understanding of the vocabulary items and help them develop sociopragmatic and sociosemiotic competence in the target language. It can be stated that the use of semiotic elements included within the nature of the lexical items not only helps learners to deduce the meanings of the words but also leads to the cognitive learning of the words due to presenting visual feedback for the students. However, it should not be forgotten that color names, proverbs, idioms, onomatopoeic words, and compound words, etc. are culture-specific despite the existence of some shared features among different cultures. Hence, students of English encounter difficulty in learning the meanings of color names, proverbs, idioms, etc. in the target language owing to being unfamiliar with the cultural semiotics of that language.

Semiotic elements can also be seen in literature since the use of figures of speech is very frequent in literary texts. Especially, the use of simile, metaphor, and other figures of speech in poems and short stories not only creates a deep effect upon the reader but also reflects how the poet or the short story writer sees the world through his literary style. Students of English may have difficulty in understanding the figurative use of the lexical items exhibiting deviations, associations, parallelisms due to being unfamiliar with the literary style of the poet or short story writer. Moreover, not having literary competence in both the mother tongue and the target language may also cause difficulty in understanding the meanings of the lexical items. If students do not know the meanings of basic literary concepts and the figures of speech, such as simile, metaphor, metonomy, hyberbole, they will be incapable of sorting out the culture-

specific literary use of the target language even if there are many semiotic signs, symbols, and elements serving for the meaning clarification of the lexical items used in literary texts.

In vocabulary lessons, it should not be forgotten that language teachers play an important role. If language teachers make use of charts, pictures, cartoons, posters, Venn diagrams, grids,tree diagrams, or stepped scales, etc, they not only contribute to facilitating the learning of the meanings of the new words in the target language but also make vocabulary learning permanent. As Ridgeway (2003:69) states, '... pictures, iconic images and the visualization of mnemonics, all of which promote inter-hemispheric communication, support vocabulary retension to a high degree.' Remembering can also be improved by using visual input.

Establishing a friendly, motivating, stress-free atmosphere in the classroom increases students' motivation to learn new vocabulary. It is evident that high degree of motivation positively affects students' mastery of the target language vocabulary and may pave the way for developing vocabulary knowledge of foreign language learners in the target language.

Factors impeding or facilitating target language vocabulary mastery should also be taken into consideration when teaching vocabulary in a foreign language class. Teachers should keep in mind that the degree of progress in vocabulary may change from one student to another. Factors like motivation, personality, nature of the mother tongue, etc. affect the degree of progress in foreign language vocabulary mastery.

Motivating students to become autonomous vocabulary learners is important in foreign language teaching. As the students do not always find the opportunity to ask their language teacher for help in real life contexts, they should be stimulated to come to a stage where they can make their own decisions about their own vocabulary learning. If the teacher teaches the students the morphology (i.e. the inflectional and derivational suffixes in English, processes of word formation), syntax (i.e. grammatical functions of lexical items), semantics (i.e. synonymy, antonymy, polysemy, hyponymy, homonymy, collocations, idioms, proverbs, color terms, etc.) and the pragmatics of words (i.e. the use of words in appropriate communicative contexts), students become autonomous to some extent because they may decipher the meanings of words by making use of the grammatical knowledge (i.e. morphological, syntactic, semantic) and pragmatic knowledge they have in relation to the target language. Furthermore, motivating students to use computer-assisted vocabulary teaching programs can also lead to autonomous vocabulary learning and hence may contribute to vocabulary development in foreign language students. However, it should be

strongly emphasized that students are semi-autonomous vocabulary learners since it is the teacher who selects the most appropriate vocabulary teaching program relevant to the needs and expectations of individual students.

In conclusion, it can be stated that language teachers should master not only the sound and spelling system but also the lexicon and the semiotics of the English language. They should be aware of the available vocabulary teaching techniques and select carefully those techniques contextualizing word meanings best, taking into account learning styles and strategies, intelligence types, personality factors, affective domain and learner autonomy. Most prominent, perhaps, is the teacher's capability to increase students' motivation to learn new vocabulary, to improve the skills and the strategies in students that will serve for the realization of autonomous vocabulary learning. Only then can language teachers be considered to perform their tasks in an efficient way and contribute to the development of students' vocabulary knowledge beyond the boundries of a foreign language classroom.

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