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DEVELOPING B2-LEVEL LEARNERS’ VOCABULARY THROUGH THE USE OF MIND MAPS IN TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING

Eshonqulova Shahrizodabonu
Uzbekistan State World Languages University, Faculty of English Philology
E-mail: shbonu06@gmail.com

Abstract. Vocabulary knowledge is important to successful language learning because it enables students to understand information and communicate their thoughts clearly. However, ELs struggle with remembering new words and using them in real life communication. Traditional vocabulary teaching methods involve memorising individual words and translations (which may not provide enough opportunities for meaningful use of language). This article looks at mind maps as a way to develop vocabulary among B2-level English learners through TBLT. Mind maps organise vocabulary; show relationships between words; and make new expressions easier to remember. Task-Based Language Teaching gives students opportunities to use vocabulary in meaningful communicative activities. Theoretical background for mind mapping and TBLT are described, target learners identified, what vocabulary should be taught explained and practical teaching techniques given. Recommendations for teachers who want to combine visual learning strategies with communicative tasks are made.

Keywords: vocabulary development, mind maps, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), B2 learners, English language teaching, vocabulary retention, communicative learning.

Introduction

Vocabulary is an important aspect of learning a foreign language. Students need words and expressions in order to understand spoken and written texts, participate in discussions and communicate ideas (even when grammar knowledge is good). If vocabulary is limited

even learners with good grammar knowledge may not be able to express themselves accurately and confidently.

At B2 level students need to understand complex texts, talk about abstract topics, express opinions and take part in different types of communication so they need more than basic vocabulary. They should develop a wider range of words (collocations), phrasal verbs, synonyms/antonyms, topic-related expressions etc.

One problem with vocabulary learning is that students forget new words quickly after studying them. This happens because they learn vocabulary as separate items (without understanding connections between words) or sometimes learn vocabulary in isolation (no connection). For example, students may know the word “environment” but not how to use related expressions (“environmental protection”, “climate change”, “renewable energy”, “air pollution”).

Another problem is the lack of opportunities to use newly learned vocabulary in communication. Students may recognise a word in a textbook but feel unsure when they need to use it in speaking or writing. The main purpose of this article is to examine how mind maps can enhance vocabulary development among B2-level learners when combined with Task Based Language Teaching. The idea is that students should not only learn new words but also understand their relationships and use them in meaningful situations.

Theoretical background

Vocabulary knowledge is one of the foundations of communicative competence. Nation (2001) states that vocabulary learning is about understanding different aspects of words (form, meaning and use). Knowing a word doesn’t mean just knowing its translation. Learners need to know how to pronounce it, spell it correctly, behave grammatically, use collocations and contexts appropriately. For example students may know what the verb make means but also should learn expressions like “make a decision”, “make progress” and “make an effort”.

B2 vocabulary instruction should develop both receptive and productive vocabulary: receptive vocabulary are words that students can understand when reading or listening;

productive vocabulary are words they can use actively when speaking/writing.

Mind maps are visual diagrams that organise information around a central idea. Ideas and words related to the topic are connected by branches, colours or keywords. The mind mapping technique is associated with Tony Buzan who popularised it as a way of organising and remembering information. Each category can have additional vocabulary, collocations and expressions.Mind maps enable learners to see connections between words rather than just memorising them one by one. They also help students organise information on their own and actively participate in learn ing.

Task-Based Language Teaching is a teaching method where students learn and practise language through tasks. Rather than just giving grammar explanations or vocabulary memorisation teachers organise activities where learners need to communicate and achieve something specific.

Mind maps and TBLT can work together. Mind maps organise and prepare vocabulary before a task is done; TBLT uses that vocabulary in communication. For example, before a group discussion on environmental problems students can make a mind map with words like pollution, deforestation, recycling and renewable energy. They can use those expressions to discuss environmental solutions. As a result vocabulary learning becomes more active, organised and connected to real communication.

The approach we propose is for B2 level English learners — students who usually have an intermediate-to-upper intermediate level of English and can talk about familiar and unfamiliar topics reasonably fluently. They generally understand main ideas of complex texts, explain their opinions and participate in discussions but may have problems with precise vocabulary usage, complex ideas expression or selecting expressions.

Therefore, teachers can use individual mind mapping activities, pair work, group discussions, presentations and problem solving tasks. Vocabulary should be organised around meaningful topics that B2-level learners would find interesting. Teachers can ask students to put these expressions in their mind maps instead of writing only individual words.

This helps learners develop more natural and accurate language. Including these forms in mind maps expands vocabulary and teaches students how words work in different contexts. Students should learn how to use new vocabulary in sentences and real communication. For example, instead of memorising the word sustainable only learners can study the expression sustainable development and use it in a sentence: "Sustainable development". "Governments should invest in sustainable development to protect natural resources."

In this section we present a practical teaching model based on mind maps and Task-Based Language Teaching. The lesson can be divided into three stages: pre-task, task cycle and language focus. At the beginning of the lesson the teacher introduces a topic (e.g. "Environmental Problems"). The teacher writes the main topic in the centre of the board and asks students to suggest words or expressions related to it. The teacher then helps students organise these expressions into a mind map. The purpose of this stage is to activate knowledge from previous lessons and introduce useful vocabulary before students start the main task.

Once the mind map is prepared students use the vocabulary to do a meaningful task. The teacher divides the class into small groups and gives each group a different topic (education, technology or health). Students have five minutes to create a mind map with as many relevant words, collocations and expressions as possible. Groups present their maps after they have completed them. The teacher checks vocabulary variety, accuracy, organisation and creativity. When students finish their tasks the teacher looks at what language they have used. The teacher points out common vocabulary mistakes, explains confusing expressions and gives additional examples. Checking students' understanding of new words and expressions. Speaking tests: Evaluating how well students understand the meaning of new words and phrases by asking questions about them in class or on a test. Listening tests: Evaluating how well students understand what is said in class or on a test by listening to it. Teachers can look at students' vocabulary knowledge before and after a series of lessons to identify their progress.

Discussion

The combination of mind maps and Task-Based Language Teaching has several advantages for vocabulary development. First, mind maps organise vocabulary visually. Instead of memorising words in isolation learners see how expressions are connected together. That may make vocabulary easier to understand, remember and retrieve. Second, TBLT offers opportunities for meaningful communication. Students use new vocabulary to exchange information, express opinions and solve problems. This is important because vocabulary knowledge is more useful when learners can apply it in real situations. Third, these techniques increase student participation. Group work and mind mapping tasks stimulate learners to share ideas and take responsibility for their learning.

However, there are also challenges. Creating detailed mind maps takes time (especially if students haven’t been taught this technique) some learners may be more interested in colours and design than vocabulary; students with different language abilities may participate at different levels etc. To overcome these challenges teachers need to give clear instructions, show examples and focus on vocabulary quality (not the visual appearance of the mind maps). It is also important to keep in mind that mind maps alone cannot improve vocabulary. Students need regular revision, meaningful practice and opportunities to use new words in different contexts.

Topics should be chosen that are relevant for B2 level learners (interests, academic needs and everyday life experiences) and appropriate for them. Relevant topics motivate students to participate. Relevant topics also motivate students to participate. For example, if the topic is about eating healthy foods then students will be more motivated to eat healthy foods.

Before asking students to create their own mind maps teachers should show them how to organise vocabulary. On the board you can put a simple example of what is expected from them.

Teachers should encourage students to include not only individual words but collocations (combinations of words), phrasal verbs, synonyms and useful expressions too.

This broadens the vocabulary range and makes it more practical.

Teachers can introduce digital tools such as MindMeister, Canva or other mind mapping applications. Students create maps, edit them and share them with others. However, traditional paper mind maps work too and don’t require special equipment.

New vocabulary should be reviewed frequently. Teachers can ask students to go back to their previous mind maps and add new expressions; use the vocabulary in speaking and writing tasks. Teachers should give feedback on vocabulary accuracy, word choice, collocations and pronunciation. They need to encourage students to use new expressions independently.

Conclusion

Vocabulary development is part of the process for achieving communicative competence at B2 level. Learners need to learn a wide range of words and expressions and know how to use them in different situations. In this article we have looked at mind maps as a visual strategy to develop vocabulary in Task-Based Language Teaching. Mind maps organise vocabulary, show connections between words and review new expressions; TBLT then gives learners opportunities to apply this vocabulary in meaningful communicative activities.The combination of these approaches can make vocabulary lessons more interactive, student centred and practical. Discussions, problem solving activities, group projects and presentations develop not only vocabulary knowledge but also speaking, critical thinking and collaboration skills as well. We know that vocabulary learning is not one-time learning; it has to be practised and revised too. So teachers should use mind maps as support in a task based learning process rather than a stand alone technique. So, in conclusion mind maps as a tool for Task-Based Language Teaching can be used to help B2 level learners broaden their vocabulary and become more confident

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