

that translating helps them acquire English language skills such as reading, writing, and particularly vocabulary words, idioms, and phrases. Evidence from psycholinguistic studies also demonstrates that the L1 is active during L2 lexical processing in both beginning and more advanced learners (Hall, 2002; Sunderman and Kroll, 2006).

Although using the L1 in second-language learning is unfashionable in many quarters, given the ubiquitous nature of L1 influence, it seems perfectly sensible to exploit it when it is to our advantage. One case where there is a clear advantage is in establishing the initial form-meaning link. Research consistently shows that more new words can be learned using L1 translations than with L2-based definitions (Laufer and Shmueli, 1997; Ramachandran and Rahim, 2004). Furthermore, since we know that learning word forms can be problematic, using the L1 to facilitate the form-meaning linkage (by providing an easy access to meaning) may allow more cognitive resources to be focused on learning the form. It is unlikely that learners will absorb much contextualized knowledge about a word at the beginning stages anyway, so there is little disadvantage to using the L1 to establish initial meaning. After the initial stage, however, meeting the new word in L2 contexts becomes important to enhance contextual word knowledge; therefore, the value of the L1 lessens. Thus, using the L1 at the beginning stages of learning a word is most efficient, but after this, L2 context is better. This suggests that different teaching methods may be appropriate at different stages of vocabulary learning.

4. Engagement with vocabulary

It is a commonsense notion that the more a learner engages with a new word, the more likely he or she is to learn it. But which activities lead to greater engagement? Research suggests that the *need* for a word is important, such as needing to know a particular word in order to understand a passage (Hulstijn and Laufer, 2001). Also, actively *searching* for information about a word seems to help, like looking up the meaning of a word in a dictionary. The greater engagement that comes from *evaluating* the suitability of a word also facilitates acquisition. Many other factors can also increase the level of engagement, and thus learning, such as:

- Increased frequency of exposure.
- Increased attention focused on the lexical item.
- Increased intention to learn the lexical item.
- A requirement to learn the lexical item (by teacher, test, or syllabus).
- Increased manipulation of the lexical item and its properties.
- Increased amount of time spent engaging with the lexical item.

- Increased amount of interaction spent on the lexical item.

Overall, it seems that virtually anything that leads to more exposure, attention, manipulation, or time spent on lexical items adds to students' learning. In fact, even the process of being tested on lexical items appears to facilitate better retention. In essence, anything that leads to more and better engagement should improve vocabulary learning. Promoting engagement, therefore, is the most fundamental task for teachers and materials writers, and indeed, for learners themselves.

5. Phrasal vocabulary

Teachers should not become too focused on individual words because phrasal vocabulary is also a key component of the English lexicon for at least three reasons:

- 1) It is very widespread in language.
- 2) It is used for a number of purposes, including expressing a message or idea (*The early bird gets the worm* = do not procrastinate), realizing functions ([I'm] *just looking [thanks]* = declining an offer of assistance from a shopkeeper), establishing social solidarity (*I know what you mean* = agreeing with an interlocutor), and transacting specific information in a precise and understandable way (*Blood pressure is 150 over 70*).
- 3) It allows more fluency in production.

Although there is no consensus of how to teach phrasal vocabulary explicitly, highlighting phrasal elements to students appears to be effective in raising their awareness of these items. Beyond this, maximizing the exposure learners have to English will ensure they will meet the most frequent phrasal items and have a chance to learn them incidentally from context.

6. Combining explicit teaching with incidental learning

In any well-structured vocabulary program, there needs to be a proper mix of explicit teaching and activities from which incidental learning can occur. With true beginners, it is probably necessary to explicitly teach all words until students have enough vocabulary to start making use of unknown words they meet in context.

Beyond this most basic level, incidental learning should be structured into the program in a principled way. This is important for at least two reasons: meeting a word in different contexts enhances what is known about it, which improves quality of knowledge, and additional exposure helps consolidate it in memory. Taking an incremental view of vocabulary acquisition, such enhancement and consolidation are both crucial. Explicit approaches to vocabulary learning, whether led by a teacher in a