

more learning in a short period of time than the teacher can induce over three or four lessons.

Of course, students will correct and instruct each other in their native language. This does not matter at first. It is more important to establish the principle of group teaching and testing before insisting on continuous use of English. This should be instituted slowly; otherwise the students will become shy, nervous, and totally inhibited.

A warning. Minimal sentences should form only one small part of the teaching of pronunciation. I use them as only one element in a two-lesson pronunciation unit, built around a particular problem-sound. Minimal sentences are used in conjunction with dialogues, picture sheets, flash-cards, and articulation models. Using minimal sentences by themselves can be as boring as anything else. I would recommend that the communication activity involving the use of minimal sentences should continue for no more than fifteen minutes per sixty-minute lesson.

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Teaching Vocabulary in Difficult Circumstances

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In many parts of the world English language teaching is carried out in difficult circumstances. There are economic restrictions that do not allow each student to have a textbook. Classes are large (50 or more learners), absenteeism is high, and there is a wide range of proficiency and ability in any one class. Often only a small amount of time is given to English. These difficulties help to make carefully graded, teacher-centred courses ineffective.

Material needs to be developed to meet these circumstances. Such material should be economical in terms of time and cost. It should do as much as possible in the shortest time, for the cheapest cost. Secondly, the material should be self-motivating. It should challenge both the top and bottom learners in the class. Thirdly, because classes are large, it should require only a minimum of teacher guidance, supervision, and marking. Finally,

it should take absenteeism into account and not rely on a closely graded sequence of learning.

This article describes some attempts to develop such material for vocabulary teaching. The material is based on an area approach. The words that the learners are expected to learn are divided into various levels: 500 words, 1000 words, 1500 words, and so on. Where each learner begins and ends a level is unimportant as long as most of the material is covered. Each vocabulary teaching exercise occupies one typed foolscap page. Every word within the level is presented in at least four different exercises. At least thirty words are taught in each exercise. All the other words in the exercise are from a lower level. Thus to teach 500 words within any one level, approximately 70 exercises are required. Each exercise is sealed in a plastic bag and they are all put in a box. Learners use them in a similar way to a reading box. They work individually on different exercises at their own speed. Answer keys are used for self-correction. Each exercise takes on an average about twenty minutes. During these twenty minutes the learner has paid close attention to thirty or more words, most of which are new to him.

Here are examples of the exercises. Only a part of each type of exercise is given.

One more sentence

Find the missing sentence from each group. Write the number of the missing sentence and write the correct word next to it.

A farm is a big piece of land.

A farm is usually in the country.

Sometimes a man grows vegetables or rice on *a farm*.

The missing sentences:

1 It can hurt people with its sting.

2 We use it when we want to know the way.

3 People keep it and feed it.

A hen is a big bird.
We get eggs from *a hen*.
A hen eats corn and other things.
A hen cannot swim.

A map is very useful.

A map is a picture of streets, roads, towns, and cities.

A map shows us the hills, mountains, and rivers.

A restaurant is a building.

A man sells food in *a restaurant*

People can buy many kinds of food and drinks in *a restaurant*.

A bee can fly.

A bee is yellow and black.

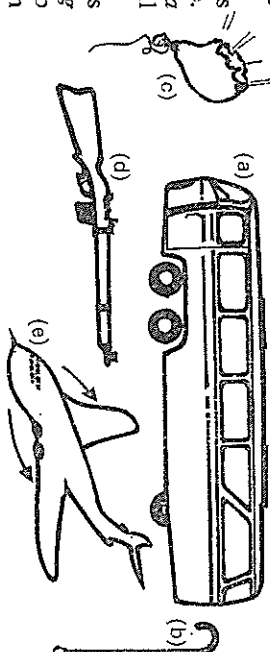
A bee makes honey.

Note that the words are presented in context and that reading for understanding and guessing from context clues are demanded. Six groups of five make up one exercise. When this exercise is used for teaching adjectives, verbs, or adverbs, the missing sentence has a blank space where the new word should be.

Find the picture

Find the picture and write the word.

1. A bird has two wings.
2. *A bus* carries many people.
3. People use a gun to kill animals.
4. Old persons use a walking stick to help them when they walk.
5. The tyre *burst* and all the air came out.

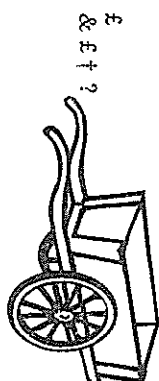


Thirty words are taught on one page. They are not broken into smaller groups. When non-picturable words are taught, the same type of context sentence is given and instead of a picture a definition is used.

Find the words

Many words are in code. Find the words. The first word * : ?) † has five letters. Do your work very carefully.

- 1 He is at his office * : ?) † six o'clock, and then he goes home.
- 2 Be careful when you \$ + * † the water from the jug into the bottle.
- 3 What is the \$ †) & S of that shirt? Is it expensive?
- 4 If he wants to do it, † S ? him do it.



Each exercise contains thirty items. All the coded words in an exercise make use of less than fourteen different symbols and each symbol occurs in at least five different words in the exercise.

Five out of the thirty coded words are from a lower level. By solving these easy words the learner is able to write the new words correctly. This exercise gets very close attention to the new words, especially their form, and presents them in context. Learners at all levels enjoy the challenge that this exercise presents to them.

A variation of this technique is to list difficult words, in code, with glosses under a reading passage. The learners decode the words by trying to find them in the passage. The glosses of the words help the learners to find them. Once a few words have been decoded the rest are easy. This variation ensures attention to the glosses.

Learn and test

In these exercises a variety of techniques of teaching words are used: labelled pictures, words with definitions, words in contexts, words and synonyms. On the back of each page the same words are tested using a different method. Thus if the words are presented with definitions, then on the back the test requires insertion in contexts and so on. If a labelled picture is used for presentation, then the words are tested using a different picture or matching words and written meanings.

Dictionary work

The learners all have a 2000 word dictionary, English—mother-tongue, mother-tongue—English. This enables them to do cross-word puzzles and other types of puzzles as vocabulary learning exercises.

Two final points are necessary.

Analysis of the results of vocabulary tests shows that although the class average on a test may be 95 per cent in fact only 40 per cent of the words are known by every student. If the teacher presents the remaining 60 per cent of the words, at least half the learners will already know the words presented. This argues for an individualised teaching approach, as outlined in this article. Learners can go quickly over the already known material and can spend more time on the material that is new to them.

Direct vocabulary teaching as outlined above is not a substitute for vocabulary learning as a result of substantial extensive reading of graded material. It merely supplements this and tries to speed the process.