



TEACHING IDEAS

A CHECKLIST FOR TEACHING

VOCABULARY

1. We need to think about the status of the vocabulary in our lessons.

- Do we intend the vocabulary to be receptive or productive? (Is this a useful distinction?)
- What do the children need to do with the vocabulary? (e.g. respond non-verbally, use it in context)
- Is the vocabulary target language? ie a part of the course syllabus that will be formally assessed.
- Is it incidental learning as part of acquisition-rich input that some children may learn and others may not?

2. We need to make sure that the meaning is clear.

- By visual means: through flashcards, pictures, posters, photos, storybooks, objects.
- By physical means: mime, gestures, expressions, actions.
- By using a multi-sensory approach: touching, feeling, smelling, listening, tasting, pointing, walking to ..., bringing, fetching, giving and taking.
- By using technology: DVD, video, computer, CD-ROM, TV
- By verbal means: explaining, giving a definition of the word, defining the context in which it is used, describing the word, identifying it through its opposite.
- By translating: eliciting or saying the meaning in L1
- By a judicious combination of any of the above.

3. We need to encourage children to notice the form.

Phonological form

- By providing lots of opportunities to listen to new vocabulary both in a discourse context (e.g. a story) and in isolation (e.g. a flashcard game).
- By providing lots of opportunities for (non-threatening) repetition, rehearsal, experimentation in getting your tongue round the new combinations of sounds
- By drawing attention to sounds (vowels, diphthongs, consonant clusters), syllables and stress patterns (either implicitly or explicitly depending on the age).

Written form

- By providing opportunities for children to associate the written form (shape of the word, initial and final letters, letter clusters, spelling) with the sound and meaning
- By providing opportunities for children to notice the 'grammar of vocabulary' (either implicitly or explicitly depending on the age) e.g. whether a noun is countable or uncountable, the plural regular or irregular etc..
- By training children to copy and organise the vocabulary they learn carefully and accurately.

4. We need to provide for the creation of a network of meanings which will help memory processes.

- By presenting words in contexts which show the connections between them e.g. stories, topics, themes, situations.
- By giving children opportunities to group words together in logical ways which develop and extend a network of meanings e.g. webs (e.g. which show from general to specific hierarchies), whole to parts (e.g. parts of a house, body, classroom), cline (e.g. words to describe temperatures from boiling to freezing).

5. We need to provide a variety of opportunities for recognising, practising and using the vocabulary.

- For example, through a wide range and variety of games, songs, chants, TPR, drama activities, word puzzles, crosswords, picture dictations, sorting and classifying activities, sequencing activities, visual observation activities, art and craft.

6. We need to actively help children to develop and improve their memories.

- By integrating memorisation as part of the design of activities e.g. in memory games, magic word chants, songs.

7. We need to create opportunities for children to extend and develop their vocabulary according to their interests and abilities.

- By giving children opportunities to set their own learning agendas.
- By creating opportunities for choice and personal decision-making in vocabulary children learn.
- By offering options e.g. in homework, research and project work.
- By training children in reference, dictionary and computer skills.
- By encouraging independent reading.
- By having available word bags or boxes with words (and pictures) organised e.g. alphabetically, grammatically or based on topics / situations for independent reference.

8. We need to promote the systematic recording and organisation of vocabulary.

- By making it clear which vocabulary we expect children to record and remember e.g. writing this in a special section on the board during the lesson.
- By encouraging the use of vocabulary books which can be organised in a variety of ways e.g. in alphabetical order, according to topics, stories or units of work, according to grammatical categories etc., depending on the age and level.

9. We need to recycle vocabulary frequently.

- By providing opportunities for children to meet familiar vocabulary in new contexts.
- By ensuring that children extend and enrich their understandings and associations of words each time they meet them again.

10. We need to allow for personalisation and 'ownership' of vocabulary.

- By providing opportunities for children to relate the vocabulary they learn with their own feelings, moods, personal opinions, possessions, likes and dislikes, experience at home and school and beliefs about the world they live in.

11. We need to recognise that different ways of learning vocabulary will appeal to different children.

- By providing vocabulary input in a variety of ways.

12. We need to train children in learning skills and strategies that will help them to develop their vocabulary.

- By introducing and modelling a wide range of vocabulary learning strategies (metacognitive, cognitive and socio-affective) with the children.
- By encouraging children to adopt and use the strategies that they feel work best.
- By teaching dictionary and reference skills in a systematic way.
- By providing training in independent strategy use e.g. for spelling: look, cover, write, check
- By building in opportunities for regular self-evaluation and reflection on own learning.

13. We need to provide opportunities to use vocabulary creatively.

- By setting up frameworks for creative activities e.g. writing a shape poem or designing a zoo, which allow children to use (even very limited) vocabulary in creative and diverse ways.

14. We need to encourage literacy skills in L1 and in L2.

- By encouraging children to 'read' pictures and interpret signs and symbols.
- By encouraging children to make strategic guesses based on what they can see and what they know.
- By showing and sharing a love of words.
- By modelling how strategies and skills in L1, e.g. for discovering the meaning of a word in a text, can be transferred to L2.