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Teaching of Vocabulary

A Vocabulary is a list of words. Some scholars have defined vocabulary as follows:

According to Strang, "The most important criterion of a word is that it is the smallest unit that can in ordinary usage function alone as a sentence."

According to Bloomfield, "A free form which is not a phrase, is a word."

Describing the importance of words for students H. W. Beecher says, "Words are pegs on which ideas hang."

Besides this, one of the aims of teaching English in India is to enable students to use it as library language. For this, they need to learn a large vocabulary which includes —

- (i) Active or Recognitive Vocabulary.
- (ii) Passive or Receptive Vocabulary.

Characteristics of words

For a good teaching of vocabulary the teacher must know the characteristics of words which are as follows:

- (i) A word can have more than one meaning. Generally, word has following levels of meaning:
 - (a) Lexical: That meaning which is given in the dictionary.

(b) Syntactical:

That meaning which is conveyed by the word order.

(c) Morphological:

The meaning which is conveyed through the forms of words.

(d) Intonational:

That meaning which is conveyed by the way the word is pronounced.

(e) Cultural:

That meaning which is related to some culture.

(ii) words convey their meaning in context.

(iii) There are no exact synonyms for quite a few words in a language.

Kinds of words

Words are mainly of four kinds:

1. Function words

These are the words with which we speak. A.W. Frisby has classified the following types of function words:

- (a) Auxilliaris for example will, shall, is, are etc.
- (b) Preposition - Averbs: for example in, on, by, from, at etc.
- (c) Conjunctions: for example - and, as, when, whose, because etc.

(d) Interrogatives: for example which, what, when, where etc.

2. Substitute words:

These are the words which are used to substitute other words. For example - I, he, she, they, we, anybody, everybody, none etc.

3. Content words:

These are the words for which we talk about. They are of the following kinds -

- (a) words for things for example book, pencil, table etc.
- (b) words for qualities for example honesty, beauty etc.
- (c) words for action for example departure, arrive, play, read etc.

4. Distributive words:

The words having affirmative and negative distribution are called distributive words. For example too, any as:

- (i) I bought a kite and Sita purchased too.
- (ii) He will not give you any of these books.

Teaching Procedure of Vocabulary

As we know there are two types of Vocabulary. They are -

- (i) Active Vocabulary
- (ii) Passive Vocabulary.