

## **STUDYING VOCABULARY IN TECHNICAL UNIVERSITIES**

During their studying in the university, students have to learn a great number of new words each academic year. The more words students are able to handle accurately, the better are their chances of understanding English and making themselves understood. To effectively acquire new vocabulary, students must go through four essential stages:

The first stage is “Noticing and understanding new words”. Introducing adjectives, things, objects, visual elements work is best with concrete nouns, but it’s very helpful to go beyond flashcards and illustrations. There are things you simply cannot teach with a flashcard. What works best in these cases are synonyms, definitions or simply placing students within a given context.

The second stage is “Recognizing new words”. Matching is an effective type of exercise with countless possibilities. Students may be required to match opposites, antonyms, or a word with its definition, as well as a picture to a word. One more resultant exercise is filling in the blanks (with options). When a piece of written text with blank spaces (it may be anything from a description, song, letter, to even a short story), must be filled in from a list of words. A teacher can adapt this to longer texts, and also have longer word lists.

The next stage is “Producing vocabulary”. Descriptions are rather effective at this stage. For example, from a newspaper photo of a recent event to a personal account of a recent trip, there are countless things students can describe while putting new vocabulary to greater use. This goes for both oral and written descriptions. You may give them some guidance, like indicating that they have to use at least five adjectives in their description, or five words related to some topic.

Also, one can use brainstorming, filling in the blanks (without options), or exercise “Guess What I'm thinking”. It’s better to teach vocabulary in context and

not a list of words just because, or students won't have a chance to practice this new vocabulary. Unfortunately, having so few lessons a week, students really have to learn lists of words.

And lastly, the students are able to both recognize and produce the word. A teacher should remember the difference between recognizing and producing words: to practice recognition, the words have to be supplied by a teacher; then students use them to fill in blanks or match them. For students to effectively and accurately produce vocabulary, they have to spontaneously recall the words.

Having a good understanding of technical vocabulary is a requirement of many academic disciplines. Often in the fields of Science, Engineering there will be a need to manipulate technical language with ease and fluency. In Arts, Humanities and Social science disciplines, there will also be a requirement to use what may be termed 'specialized' vocabulary, though this will not usually be seemed to be 'technical'.

Using technical vocabulary can be a daunting task. It is clear, however, that not even a native speaker can know all the words in his or her own language, and that technical vocabulary is generally used only by specialists in the field, who work within a particular academic community.

One solution to the difficulty of using technical vocabulary is to consult some of the many on-line dictionaries and glossaries of specialized words in the English language.

Despite the difficulty of learning and acquiring technical vocabulary, many technical words have Greek or Latin base forms, and these can be easy to recognize.

Some technical words are the same across a range of different languages. Many writers provide clues about whether a word is technical or not, for example, they may define the word in the text, write the word in bold, inverted commas or in a diagram. Often, technical vocabulary is repeated within specialized text, indicating its importance. Some technical words are used outside the academic area with little change in meaning. The technical use of a word can be better understood

by looking up the full definition of the word, with all its uses, in a good English dictionary.

So, productive knowledge of vocabulary implies that the learner must be able to:

- properly pronounce the word;
- write the word and spell it correctly;
- produce the word to express its proper meaning;
- and correctly use the word in an original sentence.

When we consider what it means to know a word, it becomes obvious why it is necessary to teach vocabulary actively and to recycle the same vocabulary item in multiple contexts.