

Improving the quality of English subject for elementary students through vocabulary teaching method

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Abstract: *To have a fully developed English foundation, learners need to practice and improve four basic skills: Listening, speaking, reading and writing. To develop sustainably these skills, the most basic requirement is that learners must have a rich vocabulary. Therefore, learning vocabulary is very important for everyone when learning English. But cultivating English vocabulary large enough to perfect basic English skills is not easy if both teachers and learners have not found effective teaching and learning methods. In terms of human psychology, each age group of learners has its own difficulties in teaching and learning English in general and vocabulary in particular. In which, for elementary school level, we not only require language skills but also how to get students to participate in the lesson. Approaching from that point of view, in this article, the author stands from the teacher's perspective to contribute to solving problems in teaching English vocabulary to primary school students such as: How can students be interested in learning vocabulary, quickly remembering and deeply understanding? How to promote the students' positivity and creativity, creat optimal conditions for training, developing and improving skills in using English vocabulary in communication?*

Keywords: *Measure, quality, elementary, English, vocabulary*

1. Introduction

As the most widely used language in the world, associated with many powerful countries, for hundreds of years, English has become an important communication tool. Recognizing the importance of English, Vietnam's education sector has promoted the strong development of English teaching and learning since the country's reform and opening in 1986 . Many English teaching programs are built and put into practice. Public and non-public English education and training institutions were formed and developed very quickly, especially in big cities such as Hanoi, Hai Phong, Da Nang, Nha Trang, Ho Chi Minh City, Can Tho, etc. Many international cooperation programs on English training were born to meet the increasing needs of the Vietnamese people. However, teaching and learning English in Vietnam still has quite a lot of limitations. Among them, the limitations in teaching English vocabulary for primary school today need to be discussed from the scientific and practical aspects.

2. Research content

2.1. *The real situation of teaching English vocabulary at primary school level today*

+ Advantages

Many schools are built according to advanced models and the trend of regional and international

integration, so the facilities are spacious and modern. The teacher is in charge of from 30 to 35 students per class. The students are good, always have a good sense of learning, they are also creative, bravely exchange and learn a lot from their friends.

The School Board of Directors, head teachers and board of parents are always interested in supporting the English teaching and learning; regularly motivate and encourage teachers to apply new methods in teaching, create all conditions for teachers to focus on their work and perform well assigned tasks. Every year, the English subject is supplemented with many school supplies, arranged a separate classroom and equipped with projectors, interactive televisions and a number of separate supporting tools, so it is very convenient to organize activities for teaching vocabulary.

English teachers are increasingly rejuvenated and enthusiastic; always know how to explore, create and find good teaching methods that are most suitable for current educational goals. The development of IT helps teachers get many teaching materials via the Internet.

The textbook program has appropriate knowledge content, close to the real life of students, with many vivid pictures, creating excitement for students. The fact that students are studying under the intensive

program of 6-8 periods per week helps teachers and students have more time to organize activities and give students more practice.

+ **Difficulties**

The level of students is not equal, so teachers have difficulty in applying teaching methods, designing activities and assessing students.

Students' English communication environment is still limited. Outside of the class time, they don't have many opportunities to chat with foreigners.

Because the majority of primary school students are very hyperactive, easily distracted, in addition, some students are shy, inconfidence and afraid to pronounce and practice communication. In addition, the syllable structure of foreign languages has many differences, so students' ability to memorize words, sentence structure... is still limited.

2.2. Some measures to improve the quality of teaching English vocabulary effectively

Measure 1: Helping students understand the role and importance of vocabulary

When students start to get acquainted and learn English, teachers need to analyze for students to understand: if learners have little vocabulary, they will face many difficulties in the process of listening, speaking and writing. When reading sentences and texts, students will not understand the content of the lesson and will not be able to do the exercises. Therefore, vocabulary plays a very important role in learning English. In fact, when we communicate with foreigners, we hardly pay much attention to grammar, but just need to use vocabulary to help them understand what we want to say. Only then we can continue.

For primary school students who are new to English, they cannot deeply understand and remember complex grammatical knowledge. Therefore, the role of vocabulary is more important, it is the most important tool in expressing their ideas.

Measure 2: Understanding the principles of teaching English to primary school students

Teaching primary school students is a rather difficult and complicated job because they do not really have the sense of learning like adults and most of them are still interested in playing. In order for students to focus on the lesson, teachers need to follow teaching principles such as:

+ *Playing rather than teaching*: This is the method of "Teaching without teaching". Teachers create a diverse playground in English for students,

guide them to play and step by step put vocabulary into those playing activities.

+ *Activities, images rather than theory*: Pictures, games, etc. are generally activities to help students participate in the environment of using English naturally without force.

+ *More learning materials than textbooks*: Following to a certain curriculum will limit the creative ability of both teachers and students. Meanwhile, teachers and students at the same time using learning tools can diversify activities in the classroom.

+ *Listening - speaking more than reading - writing*: In fact, listening and speaking skills are very important, easier to learn and imitate in foreign language learning. When students can listen and speak, they will gradually build confidence in using English.

+ *Imitation rather than grammar*: Imitation is indispensable for children, especially in learning foreign languages. Imitation helps the learning process go faster, including the application of English vocabulary to basic sentence patterns

Measure 3: Teachers need to carefully prepare for English vocabulary lessons

In order to teach vocabulary and help students remember them for a long time, teachers must prepare the following things:

+ Make a plan to teach vocabulary that learned or reviewed according to the characteristics of each lesson;

+ Select suitable games and tips to each unit;

+ Prepare some learning tools such as word boards, brushes, pictures, realia, flashcards...;

+ Prepare computers, projectors, or interactive televisions if the lesson is supported by the application of IT;

+ Prepare and arrange classes to organize some effective games for students.

Measure 4: Teachers firmly grasp the process of teaching vocabulary

When teaching English vocabulary, teachers should follow the following three steps.

Step 1: "Listen": Students listen to the teacher or CD. The purpose of this listening is to form the first step for students on how to pronounce that word.

Example: Teach the word "*bag - cái cặp*"

+ Let students observe the picture about the bag (answer 1 question)

+ Teacher reads "bag" - Students listen (two to

three times).

Step 2: “Speak”: The purpose of this step is to help students practice pronunciation and imitate what they have just heard.

- + The whole class reads “bag”: 3 times
- + Read in group “bag”: 3 times
- + Read individual “bag”: next turn

Step 3: “Reading”: The purpose of reading is to help students identify which words, how many syllables, and word structures to re-read correctly.

+ Teacher sticks and writes the word “bag” on the board.

+ Students observe and self-identify “bag” includes which letters, how many syllables.

Measure 5: Teachers use suggestive methods to introduce vocabulary

There are many methods that teachers apply to their lessons such as using realia; pictures, visual images; gestures; give the situation; antonyms, synonyms, etc. Here are the methods that are worth referring to for their usefulness.

a. Using real objects (Realia)

The teacher prepares real objects related to the vocabulary of that lesson. The teacher points to real objects related to the vocabulary to be learned. Then, the teacher asks the students to look at the object and guess the meaning of the word. Students can guess the meaning of the word in Vietnamese or English. After students guess, the teacher gives them new words. This method creates high concentration when observing. Moreover, it creates learning excitement for students because it is very close to them.

b. Using pictures, visual images (Visual)

This is a common but highly effective method to help students learn vocabulary. To teach in this way, teachers need to prepare pictures and images related to the vocabulary to be taught. Teachers should use colorful, funny pictures and images to stimulate students to learn vocabulary.

c. Using gestures and gestures (Mime): help students easily absorb and remember new words because students have experience activities with their body language. This is a method that teachers describe new words with actions, gestures for the students to say and follow.

Measure 6: Check vocabulary through games

This method can be transformed into specific communication situations and activities:

a. Matching

This is a very popular activity in teaching English

vocabulary lessons. With this activity, students must match the picture with its word and vice versa, or it can also be a pair of antonyms, singular with plural... depending on the content or intention of the teacher. Teachers can do this in the following order: Divide the class into several small groups; Hand out worksheets to groups; Request to work in groups; Teams cross-check each other’s work; Reward the group with the highest results;

b. Lucky number

This method helps to create an excitement atmosphere, train students’ ability to concentrate in class. The requirement is that the teacher prepares questions and answers to follow the content.

c. Crosswords

This game requires students to guess the letters to find in a horizontal row to find the vertical row. The team that guesses the vertical crossword will win.

d. Charades

This game helps students remember some words describing actions. This activity includes many forms, but all use gestures to express meaning. To organize the game, the teacher will: Put some word cards or picture cards face down on the table; Ask 1 student to pick up 1 card but do not tell the whole class what it is; That student must use gestures to express the meaning of that word; Based on the above gesture, the other students in the class guess the word in the card.

e. Simon says

This game is for the whole class, not in groups or pairs. The purpose of this game is to help students remember words and is often applied to short commands. The teacher organizes this game as follows: Shout the commands; Students only follow the teacher’s orders if the teacher reads the command sentence that begins with “Simon says”; The teacher reads the command without the sentence “Simon says”, students are not allowed to carry out that order. If any student does, they will be eliminated from the game;

f. Use pictures to say words

The purpose of this game is also to help students revise words and how to use sentence patterns. To organize this game, teachers need to: Let students observe pictures and use question and answer form; Teachers give pictures and ask students to work in pairs.

(Xem tiếp trang 108)

| | | | | Nữ | | | | | |
|--------|--------|-----|-------|----|-------|-----|-------|----|-------|
| Test 1 | 32.10 | 158 | 98.75 | 18 | 11.25 | 104 | 65.00 | 38 | 23.75 |
| Test 2 | 20.81 | 158 | 98.75 | | | | | | |
| Test 3 | 197.43 | 158 | 98.89 | | | | | | |
| Test 4 | 5.59 | 158 | 98.75 | | | | | | |
| Test 5 | 12.02 | 147 | 91.86 | | | | | | |
| Test 6 | 949.48 | 126 | 78.75 | | | | | | |

Kết quả tại bảng 2.3 cho thấy: Đối với nhóm nam SV: Thê lực của nam SV có 05 nội dung xếp loại đạt với tỉ lệ >90.00% là test 2, 3, 4, 5 và 6; Test 1=87.78%. Tổng hợp đánh giá xếp loại cho thấy: Có 24 SV đạt loại tốt =26.67%; 50 SV loại đạt =55.56% và 16 SV loại không đạt =17.78% trên tổng số.

Đối với nữ SV: Test có số SV đạt mức cao là test 1→5/6. Tổng hợp đánh giá xếp loại thê lực cho thấy: Có 18 SV đạt loại tốt =11.25%, 104 SV loại đạt =65% và 38 SV loại không đạt =23.75%.

Như vậy, sau khi ứng dụng các bài tập trong một học kỳ thực nghiệm, thê lực của SV năm thứ nhất Trường ĐH Ngân hàng Tp Hồ Chí Minh đã có sự thay đổi, cả nam và nữ SV tỷ lệ xếp loại tốt và loại đạt tăng lên, xếp loại không đạt giảm xuống.

3. Kết luận

Kết quả của nghiên cứu đã lựa chọn được 20 bài tập phát triển thê lực phù hợp với đối tượng và giá trị tin cậy trong phỏng vấn các nhà chuyên môn

(≥80%). Sau một năm ứng dụng thực nghiệm thực tế, sự phát triển thê lực của đối tượng nghiên cứu đã tốt hơn hẳn so với trước ($t_{\text{trình}} > t_{\text{bảng}}$ tại $p < 0.05$). Sau quá trình thực nghiệm ứng dụng, kết quả thu được đã có sự thay đổi, cả nam và nữ SV có tỷ lệ xếp loại tốt, đạt tăng lên rõ rệt theo thang đo xếp loại của Bộ GD&ĐT. Tuy nhiên, tỷ lệ không đạt ở nội dung sức bền chiếm tỷ lệ cao với số không đạt =23.75% đối với nữ và 17.78% đối với nam SV.

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Improving the quality of English..... (tiếp theo trang 72)

g. Draw pictures: The purpose of this game, beside reviewing words, also helps students listen and remember words. To organize this game, teachers and students need: Teachers read, ask students to listen and draw again. However, due to the limited amount of words and listening ability of primary school students, teachers only read simple words; After completing the picture, the teachers check the student’s picture again to assess the student’s level of listening and understanding of the word.

3. Conclusion

In order for each primary school student to improve the basic skills of English as listening, speaking, reading and writing, it is necessary for them to have a large and rich vocabulary. At the same time, students also need ability to use the vocabulary learned in the context of reading and writing. Therefore, teaching vocabulary effectively has become one of the prerequisites to help primary school students improve their foreign language ability.

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