

Sense Relations and How to Teach Synonyms and Antonyms

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This article takes account of both theoretical and practical parts related to sense relations, synonym and antonym. Sense relations are first explained and characterised; following by synonym and antonym, and finally methodology in vocabulary teaching, particularly how to teach synonyms and antonyms.

1. Sense relations

According to Clark (1993), words form a language; they are used to communicate events, ideas, human activities, and so forth. In the case of lexicon which is very complicated, people need to learn or know about semantic relations, word meanings, both surface and deep meanings, so as to use language as an effective and purposeful means of communication in real life.

Sense relation is literally an association of meanings of words. Trask (1997: 197) briefly defines it as: *"Any of the various ways in which the meanings of words may be related. For example, one word may be a synonym, an antonym or a hyponym of another."* He also adds: *"Words do not have meanings in isolation; instead, the meaning of a word is usually related in important ways to the meaning of other words."* The most distinguished relations of meanings of words are collectively noticed as sense relations which includes synonym, antonym, meronymy², and hyponymy³ (Trask, 1999: 272).

Sense relationship, mentioned by Schmitt (1997: 212-213), is categorised under a title of related words. He describes how learners can link a meaning of a known word to other new words that share or involve some type of sense relationship. For example, coordination, a learner knows a word 'apple', he/she can then link it with other kinds of fruit (e.g. pears, cherries, peaches, etc.). In addition, a learner may associate words, such as 'irritated' and 'annoyed', as synonymous words; and 'dead' and 'alive', as antonymous words.

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² 'Meronymy': the relationship which obtains between 'parts' and 'whole', such as wheel and car or leg and knee, (Crystal, 1997: 239).

³ 'Hyponymy': a relationship between two words, in which the meaning of one of the words includes the meaning of the other word. e.g. 'dog', 'cat', 'rat', etc. are called hyponyms grouped under 'animal', a general term or 'superordinate', (Richards, Platt & Platt, 1992: 169-170).

Aitchison (1987: 72-85) refers to some previous studies concerning semantic networks including word association tests. She describes four prominent items concerning ways in which people form word-webs or semantic networks.

For instance, a) coordination - words are clustered in the same level of detail (e.g. salt-pepper, red, white, green, etc.), including words in an opposite category, such as left and right; or the words which are two commonest members namely hot-cold, warm-cool, b) collocation - people response words collocated, e.g. *butterfly net*, *bright red*, and *salt water*, c) superordination - for example, *butterfly*, *moth*, *fly*, and so on come under a superordination of 'insects'; *red*, *blue*, *green*, and *the like* come under a superordination of 'colour', d) synonym and antonym - a word, such as *hungry*, is linked to *starving* as its synonym. Antonymous words are opposites, e.g. good and bad, high and low, and so on. Words naturally have their networks, relationship or association towards other words in terms of a linguistic system.

In addition, Gairns and Redman (1986: 22) precisely describe 'sense relations' - a word can only be understood and learnt, if it has a relationship or association with other words in the language. The relationship between words can be easily identified by native speakers, whereas non-native speakers or L2 learners need to be taught to choose an appropriate word and to place it properly and meaningfully in a context in order to convey an exact and effective message in real communication.

To put it in a nutshell, it can be said that sense relations involve an association in meanings of words. The relations can be synonyms, antonyms, meronymy, hyponymy and other related groups.

2. Synonym and Antonym

2.1 Synonym

Words that have the same or nearly the same meaning are called 'synonyms', Fromkin and Rodman (1993: 131). Leech (1981: 92) describes synonym and antonym as follows: "*The only words for semantic relatedness in general use in our language are synonym (word of the same meaning) and antonym (word of opposite meaning).*"

Both synonym and antonym are related to sense and reference. Lyons (1977: 199) states that words which have the same sense are synonymous. Additionally, Leech (1981:103) describes lexical pairs, which he calls lexical converses. Synonymy can exist according to the conversion of lexical pairs. The following sentences show synonymy in terms of relative opposition - lexical converses.

a) *Jane is a daughter of Jim.* This sentence is equal to sentence (b) below:

b) *Jim is the parent of Jane.*

Regarding both sentences, Jim has only one daughter and her name is Jane and Jane has a father and his name is Jim. Therefore, each sentence has the same sense. Jane and Jim's daughter are therefore synonymous.

Apart from the types of synonyms mentioned above, Aitchison (1987: 82) claims that absolute synonyms are difficult to find. She states that words which have similar meaning are not perfectly interchangeable. This can be found in slips of the tongue. Aitchison's example: a person may say, "I don't know many brands (species) of tree." In this sentence the words 'brands' and 'species' are near synonyms but they are not interchangeable in this context.

Similarly, Lyons (1995: 60) states that absolute synonyms are hard to find, but that they can happen where two or more words satisfy the three conditions: "*all their meanings are identical, they are synonymous in all contexts, and they are semantically equivalent.*"

Another interesting point is that different words having similar meanings may not share the same semantic field. For example, sub-senses of *house*, *abode*, *domicile*, and *home* are synonymous in some contexts, (Carter, 1998: 20). In a normal context of verbal communication it is rare to substitute one of these words: 'abode', 'house', 'domicile' or 'apartment' to 'home' in a sentence: "*She was born in Spain, but she's made Florence her home.*"

In addition, Carter (1998: 20) describes more stylistic differences as follows:

"*However, stylistic differences limit substitutability. And in an absolute sense there can be no such thing as, nor any need for, totally substitutable synonyms.*" Carter also provides an example of incomplete sentence: 'What an impressive_____ of book'. The near synonyms given are *range*, *selection*, and *choice*. Clearly, because of the limitation of the stylistic differences, there is only one word (i.e. *range*) that is suitable for the blank. In sum, we may say that sometimes words cannot be fitted properly in the same position in a sentence even though all are synonymous.

Regarding Martin's (1984: 130-137) article: '*Advanced Vocabulary Teaching: The Problem of Synonyms*', four dissonances (i.e. stylistic, syntactic, collocation, and semantic) are explained. 'Stylistic' interferes with encoding, often produced by advanced students. She gives an example of a sentence made by a learner: '..... dunk the chicken

pieces in the beaten egg mixture.' 'Dunk' is not an appropriate word for the context of 'recipe'. She suggests that in order to teach new vocabulary teachers should explain the following points to their students:

- a) Stylistic level, e.g. formal, informal, colloquial, slang, regional, technical and so on,
- b) Some examples of the word and its main grammatical frames; also contrast some words in a reading passage with synonyms appearing in the lesson,
- c) Illustrate most common collocated words,
- d) Lastly, demonstrate how to select an appropriate synonym for the right context (i.e. the meaning of a key synonym needs to be explained).

In addition, Wilkins (1972: 124) agrees with the idea that every word which has similar meanings cannot be perfectly interchangeable in the same context. He states: *"However, in a given context, it is possible that one item may be substituted for another with the overall meaning of the utterance remaining the same."*

The following example shows the substitution of 'conception' and 'idea'.

"My idea of a university is of a community of scholars."

Wilkins claims that 'idea' can be substituted by 'conception' without changing the meaning of the sentence and the message to be conveyed still remains. However, he notes that in other context the word 'idea' is unlikely to be substituted by 'conception', for instance: *"His new idea seems a good one."* Lyons (1977: 243-69) also emphasises two important points: a) an awareness of the context in which each word appears, as it will help a learner select a proper synonym for a proper context, b) it is impossible to study words in isolation from their grammatical structure.

The detail described above reveals some dominant points of synonyms (i.e. an existence of synonym due to a conversion of lexical pairs, different meaning of each synonymous word, stylistics of synonymous words, etc.). Using or choosing a synonym appropriate to the context has to be considered carefully. These points will be discussed in section 3 - how to teach synonyms and antonyms.

2.2 Antonym

Antonym is defined by Fromkin and Rodman (1993: 164): *"Two words that are 'opposite' in meaning are antonyms. Antonyms have the same semantic properties except for the one that accounts for their oppositeness."*

Antonyms are basically categorised as pairs namely: a) 'complementary' (e.g. alive-dead), b) 'gradable' (e.g. hot-cold), and c) 'relational opposites' (e.g. buy-sell, employer-employee, etc.), (Fromkin and Rodman, 1993: 164).

The categories are described as follows:

a) Complementary pairs

'Complimentary pairs' such as 'awake' or 'wake up' and 'sleep' or 'asleep' can be described as counterparts. For example, 'Jane awakes.' means she stops sleeping or she is conscious and alert. On the other hand, 'Jane is sleeping.' means she is naturally in an unconscious or slumbering state. To put it simply, 'not sleep' is equal to 'awake'. It can be therefore said that 'sleep' and 'awake' are antonymous in terms of 'complimentary pairs'.

Carter (1998: 20-21) proposes that *antonym* is an idea of opposite meaning or unrelatedness. He describes words of opposite meaning categorised in 'complementarity' as non-gradable. For instance, words like 'alive' and 'dead' cannot be modified by very, slightly, or extremely.

b) Gradable

In addition, Fromkin and Rodman (1993: 164) provide some examples of words which are grouped as gradable pairs of antonyms, such as big-small, hot-cold, fast-slow, and happy-sad. Notably, the negative of either word in each pair is not synonymous with its couple. An example of 'happy and sad' is explained that a person who is *unhappy* or *not happy* does not really mean that he or she is sad.

It is claimed that antonyms are gradable where *more of one is less of another*. For instance, taller is less short and wider is less narrow (Fromkin and Rodman, 1993: 164)

Carter (1998: 21) uses the term 'antonymy' to mean: 'in a more restrictive sense of gradable opposites e.g. hot-cold; big-small; good-bad, which are all gradable relative to each other with reference to a norm.'

Carter (1998: 20-21) also states: "We must note here, however, that the same word can be antonymous with more than one word depending on different semantic networks, e.g. old can be an antonym of young and of new."

Lyons (1977: 270-271) states that the standard technical term for oppositeness of meaning between lexemes is 'antonymy' and also describes clearly the difference between *gradable* and *ungradable* antonyms, the former being concerned with comparison,

the latter directly dictating itself, as it is unable to be used as comparison. Other notable characteristics of several pairs of gradable antonyms are 'marked' and 'unmarked' members related to the theory of markedness. In terms of degree, for example, people normally ask a question, such as "*How tall are you?*" We rarely see the question: "*How short are you?*" and the answer will correspond with the question: "*I am four feet tall.*" An answer, such as "*I am four feet short.*" seldom occurs. So, we see that *high* and *tall* are claimed to be *unmarked members* of high-low and tall-short (Fromkin and Rodman, 1993).

Leech (1981: 114) gives an example of an experiment shown in Clark and Clark, (1977: 455-60) concerning marked and unmarked, which reveals: "*..... people respond more quickly to unmarked than to marked terms.*"

c) Relational opposites

Relational opposites show balanced proportion in their meaning. Opposite pairs like give - receive, buy - sell, teacher - student, employer - employee are called *relational oppositions* (Fromkin and Rodman, 1993: 133).

Carter (1998: 20) uses the term *converseness* instead of *relational opposite*. He describes opposite words in a pair, such as *husband* and *wife* as contrastive lexical relations where a measure of logical reciprocation is obvious. In a sentence: '*He is her husband.*' can be reversed as '*She is his wife.*' This causes a production of reciprocal correlation. So, words categorised as *relational opposites* relate interactively to each other according to their nature and logic.

Carter (1998: 20) furthermore claims that the difference between antonyms categorised under *converseness* and antonyms grouped under *complementarity* is the interdependence of meaning. For example, in the case of buy and sell, each obviously depends on the other. In terms of the semantic fields concerning reciprocal roles, there are buyers and sellers; a buyer supposes to buy things from a seller. Both words therefore show interdependence of meaning. However, Hatch and Brown (1995: 65) argue that such pairs as *teach* and *learn* are neither synonym nor antonym. Both words have converse relations which are linked to script (i.e. 'a template for an event').

Hatch and Brown (1995: 145) express the view: "*Concepts are part of the script for an event and the vocabulary for the concepts is 'activated' along with the script.*"

⁴ The theory that in the languages of the world certain linguistic elements are more basic, natural, and frequent (unmarked) than others which are referred to as 'marked' (Richards et al., 1992: 220).

Other examples, such as lecturer-student, *teach-study* share converse relations concerning an educational script.

Furthermore, Lyons (1977: 280) provides some examples of a corresponding *active and passive form of* transitive verbs which are used in a sentence in a similar way to a lexical converse. For example, 'A hunter killed a snake.' (i.e. killed: transitive verb in active voice). In a reversed form, 'A snake was killed (by a hunter)'. Though the subject and the object in the second sentence are reversed, the meaning of the first and the second sentences still remains the same.

In addition, in sentences containing a comparative (e.g. bigger-smaller), the comparison of each sentence can be reversed and the meaning of both sentences remains equivalent. For example, 'Your bag (X) is bigger than my sister's bag (Y). It is therefore conversely: 'Y is smaller than X.' (Lyons, 1977: 280).

Incompatibility another type of an opposite given by Carter (1998). This term means *opposite words* considered unsuitable for association or use together (i.e. words occurring in groups, such as seasons, colours, generic types, days of the week and so on). The following sentence shows the *incompatibility*:

"The car is green." excludes that it is any other colour.

Other example of a contrast of semantic field is when a day of the week is put in a sentence, other days will be excluded. For example, 'If it is Monday it cannot be any other day.'

In short, synonyms and antonyms naturally share meaning relations. According to the theoretical concepts described above, it is not easy for learners to unconsciously acquire and deliberately learn both synonymous and antonymous words. Teachers should therefore think of how to teach their students to activate both synonyms and antonyms properly and effectively.

3. How to teach vocabulary - synonyms and antonyms

We now shift from theory to practice. The significance of teaching and learning words in context is noted by many educators. For example, Lyons (1977) emphasises two significant ideas which can be applied to teach synonyms and antonyms: a) words should be taught in context; b) their grammar/syntax in relation to word formation also needs to be emphasised. Carter and McCarthy (1988:15) also state: "Thus, the more advanced the learners, the more likely they are to benefit from learning words in context."

Regarding teaching words in context, Nation (1990: 150) also suggests a technique: using vocabulary in sentences. He adds that with the help of teachers, learners will be guided to “draw on their previous experience of English by associating the new word with known words which follow the same patterns. Thus, when introducing **prevent**, it might help learners to see that **stop** shares some of the same patterns.....”

Since teaching vocabulary in context is one of practical ways of providing vocabulary learning benefit to learners, it is sensible to try to teach synonyms and antonyms in context, based on authentic materials. The next section focuses on material preparation and design in relation to characteristics of each VLS.

3.1 How to design teaching materials and learners' tasks

Before designing any teaching materials and reinforcement tasks, it is necessary to first think of learners' needs and their individual differences in L2 language learning, (Skehan, 1989). Their differences are clearly associated with their styles and preferences. I therefore consider teaching synonyms and antonyms with 'mixed approaches' or using a variety of techniques for learners to choose from to suit themselves. These clusters of strategies perhaps lead them to succeed in vocabulary learning, particularly synonyms and antonyms.

As stated by Nation (1982): “Those students who were most successful used several vocabulary learning strategies.” Similarly, this approach is advocated by other educators and researchers: McKeown and Beck (1988), Stoller and Grabe (1993), Sökmen (1997). I also believe in the efficacy of 'mixed approaches', as my empirical research, in press, (2004) reveals the success in teaching clusters of VLS in the L2 class. In this article, my focus on vocabulary teaching is therefore based on four strategies: grid, context clues, dictionary use, and vocabulary cards.

3.1.1 Characteristics of grid approach (GA)

The well-known grid approach designed by Channell (1981) and Rudska et al. (1982) is commonly used to teach learners to analyse word meanings. An example of grid is illustrated as follows:

Table 1.1 Semantic grid

	Affect with wonder	Because unexpected	Because difficult to believe	So as to cause confusion	So as to leave one helpless to act or think
Surprise	+	+			
Astonish	+		+		
Amaze	+			+	
Astound	+				+
Flabbergast	+				+

(A semantic grid for components of words meaning 'being surprised'. Source: Rudska et al., 1982)

An advantage of GA is that learners will have an opportunity to analyse the component of word meaning. It perhaps increases learners' awareness of the differences of meanings of each synonym or antonym, and also word formation related to its grammatical features. In future, they may effectively select an appropriate word for a context when communicating in L2 in a real situation.

In addition, Nation (1990: 97) describes some of the strong points of introducing learners to the grid approach: *"This exercise makes learners aware of differences in meanings between words and the features of meaning of individual words. It helps learners expand the concepts of words that they are already familiar with because the words in group help to define each other."*

3.1.2 Context clues

Words meanings, particularly similarities and differences may cause confusion when learners need to choose the right word which has a meaning appropriate to the context. Learners have to deal with dimensions of subject-object restrictions, semantic, register, formal, informal, sociolinguistic (e.g. speaker attitude, regional variation, etc.). Carter and McCarthy (1988: 103, citing Jenkins et al., 1984): *"Word meanings were learnt from context and more frequent presentation in context increased learning."*...*"Pre-exposure to some of the words by seeing them listed on a sheet with synonyms and a sentence context had a marked effect on learning from context."* Presumably context clues/cues are possibly helpful for learners, as they perhaps raise awareness of the need to make a careful analysis of word meanings, its usage, and appropriateness in different contexts.

After learners are introduced to the GA, it is perhaps useful for them to have an opportunity to practise using the words, both synonyms and antonyms in context. An idea of teaching words in context is adapted from Clarke and Silberstein (1977: 145), cited

by Nattinger (1988: 63). Meaningful context is based on the technique of context clues (e.g. redundancy, anaphora, parallelism, etc.). Clarke and Silberstein designed vocabulary exercises shown as follows:

*"Synonym in apposition: Our uncle was a **nomad**, an incurable **wanderer** who never could stay in one place."*

*"Antonym in apposition: While the aunt **loved** Marty deeply, she absolutely **despised** his twin brother Smarty."*

In addition, some exercises (e.g. antonyms in a brief context, antonyms formed by using prefixes) suggested by Wallace (1982: 75-79) are partly adapted to construct a task appropriate to learners in various home situations.

3.1.3 Dictionary use

In Schmitt's (1997) study, the usefulness and helpfulness of the bilingual dictionary (BLD) and mono lingual dictionary (MLD) were expressed as percentages: i.e. BLD: 85%, 95% and MLD: 35%, 77%. Both types of dictionary are clearly important tools to help learners enhance their L2 learning. Clearly, a teacher cannot teach all vocabulary to every learner. Teaching how to use a dictionary effectively, particularly MLD, may be beneficial to them, as they can consult it independently whenever they want to improve and develop their vocabulary learning.

Presumably, some learners may find it difficult to look up some synonyms, antonyms, idioms, and expressions, or they may not understand some symbols or abbreviations used in their MLD. It is essential that teachers explain these points to learners to enable them to use their MLD effectively on their own.

In addition, dictionaries or vocabulary reference works are effective tools to help learners improve vocabulary learning and activating words previously learnt successfully, Schofield (1997: 279-302). In addition, Alseweed's (2000) study reveals that even though MLD is useful for University students, it appears that most of the students do not know how to use it effectively. He recommended that teachers should teach students how to use MLD effectively.

3.1.4 Vocabulary card

To make vocabulary learning more practical and meaningful, it should be suggested to learners that they record words and the relevant information from a dictionary on vocabulary cards, so that they can manage their regular word revision independently. Oxford (1990); Gairns and Redman (1986) state that this regular reviewing possibly enables

the learners to strengthen their vocabulary retention and retrieval. I therefore adapt the idea of vocabulary card from vocabulary-card-box-technique (VCB) presented in the Confidence Book (Davis & Rinvolutri, 1990).

How to make a vocabulary card is shown as follows:

Words taught or met inside or outside class are written or typed on a piece of paper, postcard-size or 3"x 5" or any type of paper available and suitable to each individual learner.

Vocabulary cards are divided into four categories: a) words I firmly know, b) words I have forgotten, c) words learnt less recently, and d) words learnt recently. The purpose of categorising the cards into four groups is that 'words firmly known' might be moved to a section of 'words I forgot'. Logically, forgetting is human nature. In the real situation, words are taught every week, each learner knows best which word should be put into which section.

How to record a word -- On the front of the card a visual or graphic representation of a word can be drawn. On the back, a learner should be encouraged to record additional information about the word, e.g. its definitions, parts of speech, etc. and to make an English sentence using the word. This provides an opportunity for them to use the word in a context. Additionally, learners may want to create their own recording styles; for instance, some learners may design a graphic picture for some abstract words they want to remember effectively, or they may make a dialogue along with cartoon strips if they like doing that.

Students are asked to establish a plan to record words and to review those words regularly.

4. Materials preparation and teaching procedures

The materials selected are based on the English Reading for Mass Communication (RMC) course, which is an elective for any students who have already passed the pre-requisite courses: Foundation English I, II, and III. The students' ability in general English is intermediate to upper-intermediate levels.

The course aims at developing learners' English reading skill, particularly news articles from authentic materials. The materials used in the RMC course-book were extracted from local newspapers (e.g. *The Nation*, *Bangkok Post*, etc.) and foreign newspapers (e.g. *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, etc.). Learners have an opportunity to experience various articles ranging from local news, world news, editorials, business news, adver-

tisements, and so on. The course-book was designed by a senior English lecturer of the Department of Foreign Languages. Reading skill is explicitly focused on, whereas writing is implicitly emphasised. Learners have to complete exercises at the end of each unit, e.g. gap filling, matching vocabulary, and multiple choices exercises for comprehension checking, and so forth.

The criteria for selecting the materials:

1) News articles are chosen from authentic resources, newspapers or news articles available online

2) The articles selected are equivalent to the articles in the RMC course-book

3) Level of difficulty of news articles and vocabulary is based on Grundy's (1993) *Newspapers: Resource Books for Teachers* and Sanderson's (1999) *Using Newspapers in the Classroom*. Vocabulary in each news articles is also equivalent to the ones in the RMC course-book.

The steps of preparation, material design, and teaching procedures are described below.

4.1 Teaching materials

Preparation

News articles from BBC news online are selected to be used as an authentic task. Vocabulary in the articles is selected and displayed in a semantic grid.

The synonyms or near synonymous words are listed in the grid. Also, the meanings of each word were filled in each column, in the first row of the grid. Other grids are prepared similarly to the first one. Another news article is prepared as a reinforcement task. Some words in a news article are underlined to indicate that learners are to find their synonyms and antonyms.

4.2 Teaching procedures

The procedures involve five steps as follows:

Step 1 : Teacher introduces a grid (shown in Table 1.1) and clearly states its objectives to learners. The teacher then explains and demonstrates how to use the grid. The differences of word meanings are discussed with examples in sentences, so that the learners will realise the importance of word meanings and how to select a word appropriate to the context.

Step II : Teacher distributes handouts of a news article selected from The Guardian and two samples of semantic grids (see Table 1.2 and 1.3). In groups of three or four, learners read the extract. A word: 'release' is underlined; other synonymous words are placed in the grid. The learners were asked to discuss the meaning of 'release'. They then collaboratively mark the features of each synonym or near synonym. They are allowed to consult an MLD provided in class.

The concrete examples of following tasks are shown below.

News article: Briton seized in Nigeria

Briton seized in Nigeria

A **BRITISH** oil worker has been kidnapped in Nigeria. He was named last night as Jim Simpson, but no more details were available. The Foreign Office said it was in touch with the company involved. In travel advice for Nigeria it said: "There has been an increase in incidents where expatriate workers, mainly in the oil and gas sector, are held hostage by colleagues during industrial disputes or by local protesters. These have so far been settled peacefully."

He was reportedly abducted on Tuesday in Warri in the Delta region with an Italian who has since been released. His captors are said to be rebel youths demanding money.

(*"The Guardian", Home news (13 February 1999): 15*)

Table 1.2 Grid A: semantic grid for 'release' - 'setting free'

	To set free especially from imprisonment	To let go	Released or not suffering from something unpleasant	To permit publication or allow (information) to be generally available to the public	To free from restraint
Release	+	+	+	+	+
Free	+	+	+		+
Liberate	+	+			+

Table 1.3 Grid B: semantic grid for 'seize' - capture, taking prisoner

	Seize someone by legal authority	To take hold of or take possession of by warranty or legal right	To take into legal custody	To capture especially after pursuit	Capture a person or animal that tries or would try to escape
Arrest	+	+	+		
Seize	+	+	+		
Catch	+	+	+	+	+

Step III : Teacher's feedback is provided at the end of the task. Other information related to the words, such as stylistic, syntactic, register, sociolinguistics of the words, etc. should be stated, so that learners will have clearer or better understanding of the characteristic of vocabulary.

Step IV : Learners are asked to cooperatively select appropriate words from the news article to fill in the sentences in the following reinforcement tasks. The teacher should mention functions of the words (e.g. its inflected forms, part of speech, etc.). This will *raise learners' awareness of how to use words meaningfully and grammatically in a sentence.*

Task 2a Words in context (synonym)

Direction : Find words from the news article that can substitute the underlined words.

1. Police suspect Kim was abducted late last night.
2. A prolonged and serious labour disagreement affected the railway construction.

Task 2b Words in context (antonym)

Direction : Find a word from the news article that has an opposite meaning to replace the underlined word in the sentences.

1. The gunmen were seized in a military style operation.
2. There has been a decrease in the annual birth rate for the last twenty years.

Task 3 Context clues

Direction : Add some information that explains an underlined word.

1. German expatriates, _____, have been working in the factory for two years.
2. A major diplomatic incident, _____, caused a civil war in some countries all across the world.

Step V : Finally, learners collaborate in recording words from the news article they think they have never met before, following the example cards provided. Learners are encouraged to keep on recording other words in which they are interested outside class. In order to use an MLD effectively, learners need to be trained how to use it.

Task 4 Recording words on cards by making use of dictionaries

Direction : Find new words (at least three) from the news article, record each word on a card. Follow the following example. On the front you may use graphic design/picture that you think can help you remember the word recorded.

The card technique is adapted from Gairns, & Redman (1986) and the Confidence Book (Davis & Rinvolutri, 1990).



puzzle (v.) puzzlement (n.)

to bewilder mentally: confuse, perplex

Synonyms: confuse, bewilder, perplex

Antonym: simplify, clear

Example: I have been puzzling my head over this problem for weeks.

(Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, p.1152)

4.3 Reinforcement activity

To help reinforce learners’ retention, similar tasks were distributed in class as a reinforcement task. Learners will have a chance to practise the operational steps of the four integrated techniques. They also have an opportunity to experience an authentic news article and also to activate new vocabulary from the news article.

5. Conclusion

This article aims at theoretical and practical parts in relation to vocabulary and vocabulary teaching. The exercises presented in the third part are based on the underlying principles of theoretical concepts of sense relations, synonym, and antonym. I assume that the exercises presented here would help other L2 learners deal with problems of vocabulary learning, particularly synonyms and antonyms. However, every exercise truly has some drawbacks; so it needs to be piloted in order to be adjusted and improved properly so that it can be employed later in class meaningfully and effectively. Importantly, every task should suit learners’ needs. In addition, to develop vocabulary teaching and to help learners enhance vocabulary learning effectively, we need to be sensitive to learners’ problems and frequently sharpen our vocabulary teaching techniques. Thus, we can put theory into practice with purpose.

“We cannot teach another person directly;
we can only facilitate his or her learning.”

(Carl Rogers)

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