

Vocabulary via the Newspaper

Carol Fuller
ABE Instructor
Metro North ABE-Blaine Learning Lab

Using editorials, essays, consumer news, world and national news, political opinion, etc., learners develop the following skills:

- Predicting
- Scanning
- Dictionary
- Decoding
- Identifying meaning through context
- Comprehension

These skills are all practiced within one class session. This practice is designed for ESL learners who are level five and up and ABE learners intermediate and up.

The instructor chooses a newspaper article that has vocabulary words appropriate for the learners' level. A copy of the article is given to each learner. After selecting ten to fifteen words from the article, the instructor creates a handout for each learner with those words listed in the order they appear in the article. Enough space needs to be given after each word so that learners can write definitions. Large flashcards are then made for each word.

Following is an example of a class session incorporating this practice.

Previewing and Predicting (10 minutes)

- Display the vocabulary flashcards on a board in front of the group.
- Read the words orally or ask for volunteers to read the words. Correct any mispronunciations.
- Ask if any of the words are familiar, but do not spend a lot of time in discussion.
- Write the headline of the article on the board. Have learners predict the topic of the article.

Scanning (5 minutes)

- Give learners a copy of the article, a highlights and the handout of vocabulary words. Ask them to scan the article to find and highlight each word. (*Note:* They are not to read the article at this time.)

Dictionary Work and Using Context to Determine Meaning (20 minutes)

- Each learner should choose one of the vocabulary flashcards from the board, look it up in the dictionary, write its definition down and prepare to share it with the group as it relates to the article. Learners will need to read the article at this point (*Note:* The instructor should be circulating and assisting the learners as they look at the meanings of the words and determine the right meaning for the article).

Reading Comprehension through Oral Reading and Discussion (20 minutes)

- Even if everyone is not finished reading the article, stop and begin the oral reading and discussion. If some learners are comfortable with reading aloud, take turns reading paragraphs; otherwise, the instructor can read the article to everyone. At the end of each paragraph, the learners should share the meanings of their chosen words. The other learners add notes about these words to their word lists.
- When you are finished with the article, summarize the main points.
- Encourage learners to review the new words they want to remember (*Note*: The intent is not to have each learner try to learn 12 to 15 words each week). Review vocabulary every third session.

Other activities for the classroom:

Headline Review

- Write the newspaper article headlines from the previous three sessions on a whiteboard or large piece of paper. Using selected flashcards from prior lessons, give pairs of learners three to five words (*Note*: Choose words that are specific to the topic of the article). Learners should sort the words by placing them under the appropriate heading.

Adjective Word Wheels

- Choose adjectives from the review vocabulary flashcards and spread them on a table. Divide learners into three or four groups. Each group chooses one adjective, puts it on the whiteboard and draws a circle around it (*Note*: If you do not have a large whiteboard for all three groups to gather around, each group can be given a large sheet of paper to work on at a table). Each group has one minute to write all the nouns that could be modified by that adjective. Write the nouns on lines coming out from the circle (like spokes on a wheel). After one minute, the groups move on to the next wheel and add any additional nouns. Continue until all the groups have worked with each adjective wheel. Conclude by having each group choose the five nouns that are best described by the adjective.

Verb Sentences

- Choose vocabulary flashcards that are verbs. Divide learners into pairs and ask them to choose a word. Their task is to write a sentence using that verb (*Note*: They can use their notes from previous lessons or a dictionary). Each pair of learners should write their sentence on the board to share with the group.

Picture clues

- Collect a variety of pictures from magazines or the newspaper. Divide learners into groups of two or three. Put ten to fifteen vocabulary words on the board. Each group can choose several words from the board to use in a description of a chosen picture. It is perfectly okay to make up a fictional account of what is happening in the picture.

Draw-Demonstrate-Describe

- This activity works if the review words are concrete words and action words. It works with pairs or teams of learners. Put ten to fifteen review words on the whiteboard. The following directions may need to be demonstrated until the learners understand what to do:
 - Choose a word that you know, but don't tell it to anyone.
 - You want others to guess which word you are thinking of. You can do this by:
 - 1) Drawing a picture clue.
 - 2) Acting or demonstrating a situation (no talking allowed).
 - 3) Giving verbal clues (these can be synonyms or antonyms, meanings, fill-in-the-blank sentences).

This practice of using newspapers to teach vocabulary is easily reinforced simply for the reason that if the vocabulary is culled from the headlines, the learners will most likely be encountering the words in television and radio news broadcasts, as well as follow-up articles they may read in the next day's paper. The costs are limited to the daily newspaper, the duplication of the article and the paper used to make the lists of vocabulary words. The preparation time for each lesson is approximately 30 minutes.