

HOW TO ENLARGE STUDENTS' VOCABULARY

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"English is so rich a language that if one were to learn ten new words each day for the next hundred years, there would still be words enough to keep one busy for more than a quarter of a century."

Such a statement is not meant to discourage but to make one realize the need to increase one's vocabulary if one hopes to speak the English language adequately well.

"Nearly everyone wishes for a larger vocabulary" the dullest of our students not excepted. The latter exhibit such a wish by the frequency with which they pepper their written work with big words designed to impress the reader with the learning of the writer. That these students succeed only in producing flowery or bombastic expressions termed "fine writing" or "tall writing" is evidence of lack of reading and of a system for enlarging a vocabulary.

While it is true that students show a wish to parade new and big words, it is equally true that they exhibit a laziness to learn — really learn — unfamiliar words. It has always been a teacher's problem to get the students to use the dictionary, he will go to it for help a teacher of English to the brink of despair. The knowledge, however, that students are essentially interested in making new word acquisitions is heartening. The problem hinges only in making the process an agreeable one and as painless as possible.

To make the process a painless one, first teach dictionary skills.¹ Once the student has mastered the use of the dictionary, and this sloth has led many as he would to a friend and with none of the reluctance that characterized him when this friend was nothing but a stranger.

¹ These skills are taught in library lessons.

There are ways and ways of making the work of vocabulary building an enticing one.

A VOCABULARY GAME²

One of these is a vocabulary game which may be played by the class. The class keep a record of these "finds," the new words met in reading lessons. These words are written on card slips. On one side of the slip, the word is written with pronunciation and a phrase or a brief sentence containing the word. On the reverse side is written a definition, or one or more synonyms and antonyms. The game is begun by drawing out slips from the slit on the cover of the vocabulary box in which the slips are filed. The game is to read the side that happens to come uppermost, and without looking, to give the information that appears on the other side. This game can be made a contest between teams into which the class has been divided.

Each student will wish to keep an individual record of these new words and play the game alone. Playing this vocabulary game frequently will result in (1) an increased accuracy of definitions and explanations, (2) a rapid increase of a supply of synonyms, and (3) ease and naturalness in the use of the new words. The last is insured to a certain extent by the practice of recording the new word in the contextual setting in which it was found.

HOARDING NEW WORDS³

Another device makes use of the child's hoarding instinct. Pupils hoard words just as they do objects, stamps, movie stars pictures, etc. From their reading assignments, they pick out "strangers." They copy the sentence

² From Wade, et al. *Expressing Yourself*

³ From Clark and Eaton. *Modern Techniques for Improving Secondary School English*

in which the word occurs and guess at the meaning of the word from the way it is used in the sentence. If they can't guess, they put a question mark after the word. The next day, the best guessers go to the board to write their lists and the meanings. Then the Dictionary Squad look up the words and write their findings after the guesses. If the guess is correct, a D. S. member checks it and doesn't copy out the meaning. Otherwise, he supplies the correct definition. Students exchange papers and score each correct guess. Then each student copies all the correct meanings in his notebook. Under each word, he writes a sentence which someone in the class has suggested and which the teacher has checked. He leaves a line for a sentence of his own.

A WORD LIST FOR EVERY CLASS³

Students pick out five unfamiliar words from their home reading and bring to class the sentences in which the words occur. In class the student reads the words in context and the class write definitions basing their guesses on the way the words are used in the sentences read. Discussion follows. If the majority of the class is not familiar with the word, it is added to the vocabulary list for study.

A source of new words is the assembly speaker. Students pay close attention to the speaker to hear the unfamiliar words and to remember or jot down the sentence or at least a part of the sentence in which each word is used. Incidentally, this aids proper behavior in assembly. Boys and girls inclined to be restless and inattentive find a reason for paying close attention knowing that in the English class the next day a lively discussion of the words thus collected will ensue.

A WORD A DAY FOR BUILDING VOCABULARY³

Each day a different student puts a

new word on the board for word study. He then gives its pronunciation, derivation, meaning, and use in a sentence. If the class finds the word useful or suitable, the class accepts it. If it is declared reputable, it is used several times in a sentence. The student who gives the word for the day may vary his procedure by giving a word biography, or the history of a word. Or he may impersonate the word and give an autobiography like the following:

I AM JEALOUSY

"I am sorry to say that I have a somewhat sordid history. I have always been an unhappy, sinister fellow, but rather intriguing for all my unpleasantness. Gossipers have had much to do with me, and they have always connected my name with a plot—an unsavory mysterious plot.

"The color I traditionally wear is green, and my reputation, you may have guessed, has been shady. Yes, literally shady, as my case history will explain. Here is my story. My grandfather was French—*jalousie* was his exact name; and *jalousie* is the French word for window shade. A Frenchman who insisted that his wife draw her window curtain so that no one else might see her beauty or her smile was said to be suffering from *jalousie*, or as we know the word, *jealousy*.

"My nearest relatives are cousins named Envy, Mistrust, and Suspicion. We are an interesting enough family, but have brought more than our share of heartache in the world. We go in the best social cliques and occasionally get into otherwise happy homes, working our mischievous pranks on guests. Sometimes we go without invitation, too. My autobiography is really shady!"

A DICTIONARY RACE³

A set of dictionaries is available for use in class. The class is divided into competing teams. The teacher gives the entire class one new word and

makes sure that it is introduced in a sentence which will give a clue to the meaning of the word and to its part of speech. The pupil who finds the word first and explains it scores a point for his team.

PLAYING WORD DETECTIVES⁴

Students play at being detectives figuring out word meanings. The word is the mystery they have to solve. The little word pieces are the clues. (The word pieces are actually prefixes, roots, and suffixes.) Following is an example:

Word Clues

1. Trans means "across," "over," "beyond," or through"
2. Re means "again" or "back"
3. Auto means "self"
4. Graph means "write"
5. Mobile means "moving"
6. Photo means "light"
7. Port means "carry"

Find the meaning of trans-Atlantic, transplant, transport, transparent, return, reproduce, automobile, autograph.

A variation of this game is a word-clue race. Students skim paragraphs to find the word or words containing given word clues. As soon as they find the word, they jot it down and go on looking for the next one. The object of the race is to see who can find all the words first. Word detectives then set to work to unravel the word mysteries.

A variation of this device is keeping a word-clue file. To put the clues in alphabetical order, students use 3" x 5" cards. Each card will become the record card for one word-clue. Below is a sample (made out for dis):

dis—means "not," "apart," "away from"—Often used to make opposites

disprove—The coral snake disproves the belief that gaudy snakes are harmless.

dislodge—The shooting fish of Siam can dislodge a small lizard.

Students use the dictionary to help find new words containing the the word-clues studied.

A VOCABULARY GAME OF TRUE AND FALSE

To know the answers to each question in this vocabulary game of true and false, it is necessary to know the meaning of the key word—the unfamiliar word being studied. The quiz is based on the words picked out of the assigned reading matter. After the test, the papers are collected. Discussion then follows. Students consult their dictionaries in class whenever a disagreement arises as to the answer.

Sample of a True-False Vocabulary Quiz:

1. An ostracized person is popular.
2. An affluent banker is bankrupt.
3. An dilapitated house is an uncomfortable dwelling.
4. Avaricious persons are charitable.
5. People who laugh with derision are unkind.
6. A sick person is usually comforted by the discovery of a panacea.
7. An intercepted message is a received message.
8. We should remove children from pernicious influence.
9. One feels drawn to a person with an inimical manner.
10. Ephemeral fame is temporary.

A GAME OF VOCABULARY VARIETY⁵

Students are urged to make their written work more interesting by the use of synonyms. The following is an illustration.

From the list at the right, choose other words which would be more interesting than the underlined words in the sentences below:

⁴From Hovious, Carol. *Flying the Printways*

1. How soon will you get through with that book?
2. We got there about noon.
3. When did you get the letter?
4. Ramon could not get the cover off the jar.
5. The story tells us how Robin got out of many difficulties.
6. The boys got in through the window.
7. Jerry got better slowly.
8. The boys got in before we called.
9. He got on the horse easily.
10. I got another swimming suit at home.
11. The president asked where he get the money.
12. Did you get his meaning?
13. Got out of here immediately.
14. I don't understand why you did not got the money.
15. The cat got away from the dogs.
16. Do you get the breeze there?
17. We got to the top of the hill easily.

arise	arrive
understand	escape
have	remove
mount	receive
enter	climb
recover	obtain
feel	finish
leave	

The wise teacher reminds her students repeatedly that any program of vocabulary building they adopt must be accompanied by much reading if they hope to acquire that "feel" for words so necessary for the effective use of a language.

5 Tressler et al. *Elementary English in Action*

US... (Con't. from page 19)

All this needs sacrifice. The act of affiliation needs a centavo every three days from each member. The act of subscribing for the *Philippine Educator* needs to centavos a day. And the leaders of the association should go on giving themselves up to the higher, more satisfying call of service.

For example, we need an Executive Secretary-Treasurer. The Board of Directors has asked if the following would consider a P600-a-month job as Executive Secretary-Treasurer: Mr. Esteban R. Abada, Dr. Cecilio Putong, Mr. Martin Aguilar, Mr. Marcelino Bautista, Mr. Gregorio Lardizabal, Mr. Antonio Maceda, and a few others who have been nominated. Everyone of these men are capable. The Association will live if borne along by their enthusiasm, experience, and integrity. But would they accept the position? They are men whose careers in th Bureau of Education are assured. They have struggled from the bottom and gone up the pinnacles. Would they of their own

accord topple themselves from their pedestals and walk the path of sacrifice for the teachers whom they love and about whose welfare they are ever vigilant? Would they, to say it bluntly, give up secure jobs and high prestige in order to assume insecurity and heartache and uphill fighting, hoping for nothing but misunderstanding from teachers who selfishly think only of themselves and expect immediate material returns for their peso, meeting disappointments because of indifference of some teachers to the welfare of others less fortunate than they, hounded by the spectre of failure to swing 57,000 to a successful rally, being maligned by the skeptical and the unbelievers, but also—at the end of the bloody trail—gaining the gratitude of a future generation, prestige where service gains prestige, power where power to do good is power, success where satisfaction of spirit is success.

These are the offerings of 57,000 teachers who are in need of a leader. Would someone who can do that leadership justice pick up the challenge?