

COMBINING PICTORIAL ILLUSTRATIONS AND SEMANTIC MAPPING TO INCREASE STUDENTS' VOCABULARY MEMORIZATION

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ABSTRACT

This article was conducted to investigate the effectiveness of combining pictorial illustration and semantic mapping. It made a comparison between a traditional method of teaching vocabulary with translation, spelling, the phonemic transcription and a new method involving pictorial illustration and semantic mapping to find out whether students could memorize the words they learnt more effectively.

Keywords: Combining pictorial illustration, semantic mapping, vocabulary, memorize, effectively

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1. Introduction.

Vocabulary is an essential component and central to language and is of great significance to language learners. It provides us with material to fix to the grammatical structures in order to produce complete utterances. It is one element that links the four skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing all together. Without vocabulary, speakers cannot convey meaning and communicate with each other in a particular language.

2. Content.

2.1.1. What is vocabulary?

Vocabulary- the total number of words of a language- has long been proved to play an important role in language. Researchers and linguists say that nothing can be conveyed in language if there is no involvement of vocabulary. "When most of us think about language, we first think about words" (Pyles & Algeo, 1990). Thus, it cannot be denied that vocabulary is an essential component of language.

2.1.2. Role of vocabulary in language competence

Vocabulary is considered to play an important role in language learning, it is the heart of language comprehension and usage (Nation, 2001; Schmitt, 1997). There are many researchers mention the importance of vocabulary in language learning acquisition: Seal (1990, as cited in Celce-Murcia, 1991, p. 269) states that "To the non-language specialist, the common sense view of how languages are learned is that you substitute the words in your first language for the corresponding words in the second language.

2.2. Pictorial illustration in vocabulary teaching

2.2.1. Definitions of "picture"

A picture is "group of colored points on a flat surface looks the same as something else" Akbari, O. (2008). Pictures are usually put on paper like photographs, painting or appear as images on a television or computer screen.

2.3. Semantic mapping for vocabulary teaching and learning

2.3.1. Semantic mapping

Semantic mapping is a strategy that can be used in all disciplines to demonstrate the relationships between ideas. As semantic mapping builds on prior knowledge, and is an active form of learning, it can be a very effective teaching tool.

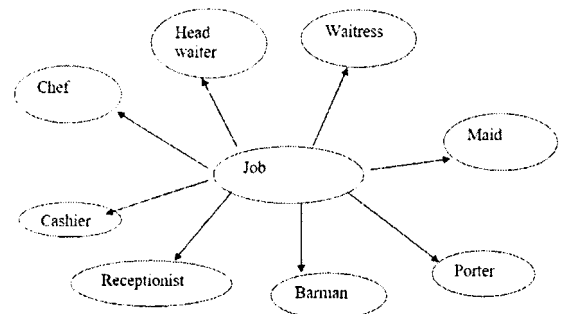


Figure 2.1: Example for semantic map "Job"

Here is an example of one way of doing it. It is based on the theory of Johnson & Pearson (1987). The steps involved in semantic mapping. Write the concept word (on the board, explain the steps involved and have students think of as many words as they can for the concept word, write the list on the board or overhead and have students copy it, and finally in

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groups have students put the words into categories. Choose a topic, for example “jobs in hotel”. Write it to the middle of a blank sheet of paper or the middle of blackboard. Explain that students think of as many words as they can for the topic word. Continue this way, students can add new words as they think and put the words into categories. Look at the sample semantic maps:

Strategies of using semantic maps and semantic grids can be used to link words and build up learners’ semantic networks. Semantic maps generally have “a key concept at the center or at the top and related words and concepts linked with the key concept by means of lines and arrows”. The following is Grains & Redman (1986) example of a semantic mapping:

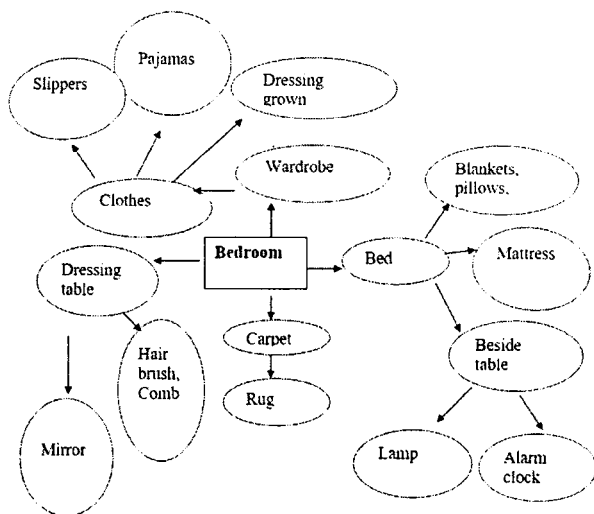


Figure 2.2 : Items in bedroom (Grains & Redman, 1986:96)

2.3.2. The effectiveness of semantic mapping in vocabulary teaching and learning

Semantic mapping is a good vehicle for students to share their work with the class, thus becoming the teachers themselves. Teaching a concept to others will increase student retention of information greatly.

Semantic mapping is also a useful strategy that can be introduced to learners at any level of proficiency. It involves drawing a diagram of the relationships between words according to their use in a particular text. Semantic mapping has the effect of bringing relationships in a text to consciousness for deepening the understanding of a text and creating associative networks for words.

2.4. Model lessons for the control and experimental group

2.4.1. A model lesson for the control group

For the control group, new words were taught

based on the traditional way. The teacher wrote a list of new words on the board. He/she then explained to the students about the part of speech, spelling, phonemic transcription, and meaning in Vietnamese of each word. After that, the students wrote these on their notebooks and they were asked to read the words after the teacher. The detailed teaching steps for the control group can be described as follows:

In the first step, the teacher spent from three to five minutes checking how the students reviewed the old lesson. The students were required to go to the board to do exercises or stay in their seats to answer the teacher’s questions. The teacher then gave feedback and marks.

The next step lasted from 12 to 15 minutes. The teacher introduced the vocabulary topic to the class. After that, he/she asked the students to look at the textbook. He wrote down the words on the board with phonemic transcription and part of speech beside each word, and then explained the meanings of the words to the students. This is an example:

Chef (n)	/ʃef/	bếp trưởng
Waitress (n)	/'weɪtrɪs/	người nữ hầu bàn
Maid (n)	/meɪd/	nhân viên dọn phòng
Head waiter (n)	/hed'weɪtə/	trưởng phục vụ bàn
Receptionist (n)	/ri'sepʃənɪst/	nhân viên tiếp tân
Cashier (n)	/kæ'ʃiə/	nhân viên thu ngân
Barman (n)	/'bɑ:mæn/	nhân viên quầy bar
Porter (n)	/'pɔ:tə(r)/	nhân viên xách hành lý

The third step lasted from five to seven minutes, in which the students practised the words that they have just given. They were asked to read aloud or silently the words in order to remember them.

Another step was for the evaluation. The teacher let the students remember the learnt words in about three minutes; then she checked their memorization of the words.

The last five minutes or the fifth step was for expansion. The teacher asked the students to use words that they had just learnt to write sentences or to make simple conversations between guests and waiters/waitresses.

2.4.2. A model lesson for the experimental group

For the experimental group, the combination of pictorial illustrations and semantic mapping was used in the vocabulary teaching. The pictures used in this study were taken from students’ course book – *May I help you* (Christopher St J Yates, 1997), or collected or scanned from Internet sources. The researcher could also use the pictures available in the Restaurant and Hotel Department or show video pictures in the classroom. This way of teaching had the following

steps:

In the first step, the teacher encouraged students to use their prior knowledge to think about the words they were going to learn, and they were also told that they would be treated with a new teaching technique. The researcher spent only three to five minutes conducting this step.

The second step was the vocabulary presentation. This step lasted about 15 minutes. To begin, the teacher wrote the concept or topic to be taught on the board. The students were then asked to brainstorm or freely think of the words that related to that concept or topic. They discussed and defined all the words on the list. They might give more words than the lesson needed or words that did not relate to the topic, so the pictorial illustration should be added. It not only helped them to imagine the words clearly but also helped to choose the exact words for the lesson and cross out the unwanted ones. The teacher could help the students refine their understanding of the words by asking them to group related words together to create a semantic map. Then students looked at the pictures that were given by the teacher and matched a word with a suitable picture as follows:

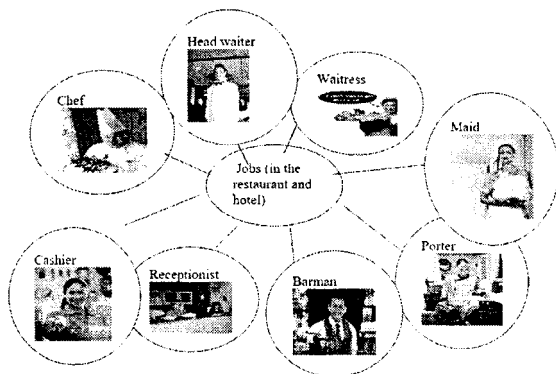


Figure 2.4: An example of the experiment with the topic "Job"

The next 5-7 minutes was spent for student practice. The students practised the words that they had just learnt by reading them silently or aloud to retain the word meanings. The teacher could show the pictures for students to speak out the words or ask them their meanings: For examples:

"How do you say "nhân viên thu ngân" in English?"

"What does "porter" mean in Vietnamese?"

Another five minutes was concentrated on the evaluation: Students had some seconds to recall the learnt words. The teacher could discuss with students whether the combination of pictorial illustrations and semantic mapping helped them to memorize and

retain the words that they had just learnt.

During the last 5-7 minutes, the teacher told the students to extend their vocabulary. The students worked in pairs or discussed with the teacher to find other main words of the topic and make the spider-gram.

2.5. Major findings

It can be proved that there is a difference between the control group and the experimental group. The latter seems to perform better than the former. In other words, the experimental subjects remember and memorize the vocabulary better than that of the control group. From the results, it can be assured that the combination of pictorial illustrations and semantic mapping has positive effects on students' vocabulary memorization.

3. Conclusion.

The article attempts to examine the effect of the combination of pictorial illustration and semantic mapping to increase students' vocabulary memorization. The results of the article show that the performance of students in the experimental group is better than that of the control group.

Basing on outcomes of the research, there are suggestions that the combination of pictorial illustration and semantic mapping should be utilized for vocabulary instruction. The role of the teacher, the selection of pictures and related words should also be considered. It is expected that this article will bring some beneficial effects on vocabulary learning and language learning as well in her institution despite some limitations.

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