A Study on Effective Methods of English Vocabulary Learning

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Abstract: English is a key subject in high school that troubles many students, especially in the aspect of vocabulary learning. Only by laying a good vocabulary foundation can students better complete the learning tasks such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking training. This paper aims to explain the importance of improving the efficiency of English vocabulary learning and discuss the effective methods of English vocabulary learning in high school, in order to help more students find their own learning methods, improve vocabulary memory and application skills, and lay a solid foundation for follow-up learning, examination, and even work.

Keywords: High school English; Vocabulary learning; Methods

1. Introduction

New curriculum reform and the "Double Reduction Policy" reduce students' academic pressure, but admitting to the ideal university has always been the dream and goal of every high school student. Therefore, the vast majority of students will correct their learning attitude and explore more effective learning methods even without the requirements of their teachers and parents, hoping to improve the study of each subject. However, vocabulary presents an insurmountable challenge in the process of learning English. Due to the extensive vocabulary and the long length of words, the efficiency of students' vocabulary learning cannot be effectively improved, which strikes the enthusiasm of students in learning English. In order to improve this situation, in addition to following the pace of teachers' lectures, students should also make efforts to spend more time and energy learning vocabulary and improve their learning efficiency with effective learning methods.

2. Importance of improving the efficiency of English vocabulary learning

For students, the efficiency of vocabulary learning is not only related to the subject performance but also may have a profound impact on their future learning and career development. Firstly, vocabulary is the cornerstone of language. Students with rich vocabulary tend to understand the content of reading materials easier and are

not too affected by new words, they can memorize new words quickly through their own methods to further increase their vocabulary. Secondly, rich vocabulary can also contribute to more accurate written and oral expressions. In particular, writing is an important part of English. Despite having strong writing skills, students face challenges in writing high-quality English compositions due to the lack of English vocabulary, which affects their test results and English literacy [1]. Thirdly, whether in the monthly exam, the final exam, or the college entrance examination, the listening test is an essential component that carries significant weight, often positioned at the beginning of the paper. This section frequently includes words that are not covered in the textbook or unfamiliar vocabulary. Many students use their spare time to watch English movies and listen to English songs, which is a powerful means to expand their vocabulary. Students' vocabulary accumulation is solid enough to make students more comfortable in the listening test. Finally, English is the international language, and it will be used in many fields of work. Students have the opportunity to improve the efficiency of English vocabulary learning in high school so that students can better adapt to the needs of work and benefit their lives [2].

3. Effective methods of English vocabulary learning in senior high school

3.1. Analyzing own situation to make a study plan

In high school, students have heavy tasks and limited time. Except for the normal class hours, there is limited time for independent study. This study time should be distributed to different disciplines. If we can make a study plan that suits our own situation, we will greatly improve our learning efficiency. In the past, we usually evaluated our own learning situation through teacher evaluation and intuitive test results. Now, we can use the vocabulary test tool to understand our vocabulary level and the mastery of the vocabulary at different difficulty levels. The relevant learning platform not only has the test function but also the analysis function, which allows us to intuitively recognize our strengths and weaknesses, and give us specific suggestions. In order to make the study plan more reasonable and effective, we should also make specific learning goals for ourselves, as well as the learning task list, and complete the independent learning task in strict accordance with the task list [3].

For example, when we evaluate our English vocabulary, we can first choose to use the vocabulary in the textbook for self-assessment, turn it to the word page at the end, cover the Chinese meaning, and quickly tell the Chinese meaning corresponding to that of the English words [4]. We can also do dictation training together with our deskmate, or test our own level of vocabulary application. For example, it is found that in "Unit 1: Friendship," although students have mastered the meaning of "add up," "upset," and other words, it is difficult to use the word "calm" in the corresponding context.

Combined with the test results, students reflected on their learning habits and found that they could remember multiple words in a short period of time, while some will forget some words soon after completing the in-class test or dictation task. After a period of time, they could only remember the general meaning of these words and which letters they contained, but could not spell them accurately.

In facing this situation, firstly a short-term learning goal of mastering all the new vocabulary of Unit 1 to Unit 4 within a month is set, as well as a long-term goal—to master 85% of the total vocabulary of the teaching materials (compulsory + elective) before the college entrance examination. The learning resources are mainly textbooks, including texts, example sentences, and related exercises. Auxiliary materials include online courses, scallop words, and word applications. Students use their spare time or leisure time to learn three to five words every day, and fully master the spelling, pronunciation, part of speech, Chinese interpretation, and sentence pattern application of vocabulary. Subsequently, they summarize their learning every Friday and review the vocabulary learned this week to deepen their memory [5].

3.2. Mastering various methods to improve learning efficiency

There are various methods to remember English words, including the classification memory method, word formation analysis method, root word compose memory method, mind map memory method, and associative memory method. Different memory methods will also have different applicable English words. Students should learn how to distinguish the application situations of different learning methods and the application skills. In the past, many students may be more inclined to make words into cards to carry around. They can remember words with cards everywhere on buses and roads. Although it is still used by many students, other vocabulary learning methods have gradually become popular [6].

For example, the word list of "Unit 1: Friendship" contains a large number of words related to friendship, including "friendship," "calm," "lonely," "concern," etc. We can choose different methods when learning vocabulary in this unit.

The use of classification and memory techniques is a widely adopted approach for improving vocabulary retention. Words can be grouped into categories such as emotions, behaviors, relationships, etc. From the perspective of emotions, for instance, we can cluster words that describe different emotional states. By associating these words with personal experiences or imagined feelings, learners can enhance their memory. For example, words like "calm," "upset," and "lonely" share emotional characteristics and can be memorized as a group. This method helps create mental connections that reinforce understanding and retention.

From the perspective of the behavior category, it is necessary to determine which words have behavioral characteristics and enter the situation where we interact with our friends. Words such as "argue," "share," "forgive," and "ignore" can be classified into this category.

From the perspective of relationships, "friendship," "trust," and "misunderstanding" can describe interpersonal relationships, and we can imagine what happened in the process of establishing and maintaining friendship, so as to deepen the understanding of these words.

With a relatively solid English foundation, we can also use vocabulary to make sentences on the basis of memorizing vocabulary and writing compositions. For the words appearing in this unit, we can create the following short essays: "When I was feeling lonely and upset, my best friend came to me and shared her thoughts. We argued a bit at first, but she calmed down and listened to me. I realized that I had misunderstood her intentions. We forgave each other and now our friendship is stronger than ever. I know I can trust her and she will always be there for me when I'm in need." This method can not only deepen the memory of vocabulary but also exercise writing skills.

In addition to the categorical memory method, the word formation analysis method can also play a role in the learning of some words. "Misunderstand" and "understand" are applicable to this method. The former consists of "mis- (wrong) + understand," which can be interpreted as "wrong understanding," where "mis" is a very common prefix, representing the negative meaning; this method allows rapid retention of two words.

Besides, articulation memory also often appears in vocabulary learning. Both "friendship" and "forgive" in this unit contain the pronunciation of "fr." Students can put them together to practice pronunciation and memorization at the same time [7].

3.3. Deepening the vocabulary understanding by combining with the language situation

The same English vocabulary often represents different meanings in different contexts. One of the goals in enhancing the efficiency of vocabulary learning is to help students improve their reading comprehension skills and identify the true meaning of vocabulary in the reading text, and at the same time, it can also be used in writing. Many students will encounter relevant problems when learning vocabulary. In order to deepen their

understanding and memory, we can use multimedia technology in the process of learning to find pictures and videos related to the interpretation of words. This method can not only improve the boredom of English vocabulary learning but also show the different definitions of vocabulary in an intuitive way. The textbook of People's Education Press (PEP) contains a large number of English vocabulary. Students can start from the textbook, and then try to further expand the vocabulary of the textbook [8].

For example, when learning "Nature in the Balance," the textbook contains many words related to urban pollution and environmental protection, including "climate," "greenhouse," "habitat," "wildlife," and so on. There are also words like "air pollution," "global warming," and "habitat loss." When learning the vocabulary of this unit, we can first think about the problems in the environment in practical life, record them in Chinese, and then translate them into English. If we encounter them, we can first read them in the textbook. If the word or vocabulary is not included in the textbook, then the vocabulary learning app is used to query. Some powerful apps will not only give accurate English words but also provide some pictures related to them to help us deepen our understanding and memory.

After mastering a certain amount of vocabulary, we can try to read by ourselves, such as "Human activities cause increasing harm to animals." When reading for the first time, it is inevitable to encounter words that we do not know. We can first circle them with a pen, or copy them on the word book, such as "indirect." After reading the full text, we can have a general understanding of what the text tells. In this context, we can find that the "hunting," "fishing," and other behaviors described above will affect the safety of wild animals, which has a direct impact. The "build farms or factories" and "ship traffic" will also affect wildlife, but indirectly. Then, we can guess the meaning of "indirect." After reaching the conclusion, we can also use the dictionary or online learning app to verify our guesses. When the guess is confirmed, we will have great confidence and pride and will be more willing to invest in English learning [9].

3.4. Reviewing in time to consolidate the vocabulary

There are certain differences between the learning mode of senior high school and junior high school and primary school. This stage requires students' high comprehensive learning abilities. Especially after entering the third year of high school, students typically stop learning new material and instead focus on a comprehensive review of everything they have learned so far. They check for gaps in their understanding, and many manage to significantly improve their grades during this critical year.

Students should also focus on reviewing and consolidating their English vocabulary, as human memory is limited and many things are easily forgotten over time. Regular review and reinforcement can slow down the rate at which vocabulary is forgotten. It is important to approach the review with a plan to avoid a "three days of fishing, two days of drying the net" situation. Specific review tasks should be incorporated into the study schedule.

At present, due to the positive learning atmosphere in the school, students generally have the consciousness of independent learning. They can not only listen carefully in class but also actively review and preview knowledge after class. In the process of learning English vocabulary, many students will review in time. Some of them use their spare time to review the vocabulary knowledge 1–3 days before class, while some students will spare more time to review the vocabulary content of this week on the weekend.

PEP education English textbooks are equipped with various types of auxiliary materials, and teachers also recommend many methods and apps suitable for students' independent learning, so that students can utilize these teaching materials independently. However, some students lack interest in learning English or have a weak foundation, making it difficult for them to improve in a short time. As a result, they often do not take the

initiative to participate in vocabulary review tasks. For these students, studying alongside peers who are more motivated and capable can help them make progress together. Students with similar academic performance and learning abilities can form study groups to review at a similar pace. They can set a specific time each day, determine how to review, and what content to focus on. For instance, the review words for this week might include "ecosystem," "biodiversity," "hardwood," and "microorganism." In pairs, students can quiz each other to assess their mastery of the vocabulary, then spend a few minutes reinforcing their memory before quizzing again. Once they are confident with the spelling of the words, they can move on to the next stage of review by using the words to form sentences or write a composition.

In the review process, the tests should be applied. Many apps have set up training modules, containing a large number of simulated tests. We can review in the form of completing the tests. After answering the test, the system will quickly give scores and comments to help students understand their learning situation. Some new apps based on artificial intelligence technology can also customize the content of the test, that is, students can automatically generate related tests on the app according to their own learning needs, so as to make the review more targeted and effective [10].

4. Conclusion

To sum up, as students, we should be deeply aware of the importance of vocabulary learning, actively plan the learning time, and at the same time, emphasize communication with teachers and other students, master diversified vocabulary memory methods, and then choose more appropriate learning methods based on our own conditions. In addition, high school students have developed their abilities in all aspects and have adequate independent learning abilities. Various learning apps also provide favorable conditions for self-study. We can improve the efficiency of vocabulary learning with relevant apps.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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