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## Vocabulary Queries

In almost every ESL/EFL class, you will be asked to explain a new word or phrase to your students. There are many ways that you can do this. For students to effectively acquire new vocabulary, you need to not only introduce the vocabulary, but also give the students lots of practice at using the vocabulary in a meaningful context. There are many ways you can effectively explain vocabulary without resorting to translation.

### Introducing and Explaining New Vocabulary

There are times when you may feel like a talking dictionary. When this happens, other techniques need to be utilized to get the students to understand unknown words. Explaining unknown words or phrases is the quickest way your students have of understanding new vocabulary. Simply by giving the students a few example sentences, the students can understand the meaning and use of a word. However, this method turns the students into passive learners and should only be used now and again. There are better ways to introduce and explain vocabulary. For real beginners or visual learners, pointing to pictures or flashcards is an easy method to explain new words. Google Images is also a good resource for teachers using this method. If you are explaining nouns, try using flashcards, pictures or realia (real life objects). The use of realia engages students and creates a more natural learning environment. Opposites (antonyms), realia and pictures work well with adjectives, depending on the type of adjective you are trying to introduce. Giving synonyms or antonyms also proves useful, as they have similar or opposite meanings. If you do use synonyms or antonyms, be careful as some words don't necessarily have the same connotation and may express something unintended. Miming is also a great technique for introducing vocabulary. This is especially true when teaching emotions.

You can get students to understand new vocabulary by asking the students to guess the meaning of new words from the context in which they are used. Many students like to translate but by guessing the meaning from the context, the students are more likely to remember the word. If a student simply translates, no real learning or memorization happens. Furthermore, translating is time consuming and students have a habit of becoming dependant on it. Other students are also a useful tool by which students can find the meaning of a new word. Generally, different students know different words, so there is a high chance someone in the classroom has come across the new vocabulary before.

### Understanding New Vocabulary

Words are used as the main source of expressing meaning, and they are the building blocks of your students' language acquisition. This means that the more words a student understands and is able to produce accurately, the better chance they have of making themselves understood.

Once vocabulary has been successfully explained, you need to make sure the students can recognize the new words. Matching activities can be used to help students recognize vocabulary. Students can match opposites, synonyms, a word with its definition, or words to pictures. Playing bingo is another simple way to check your students' recognition of new vocabulary. You could do this in numerous ways, such as playing bingo with illustrations and words, or words and definitions, or vice versa.

After that, create some activities for students to practice producing the vocabulary. They could create oral or written descriptions incorporating the new vocabulary. Role-plays based on a context also give students the chance to practice new vocabulary. 'Fill in the blank' activities work equally well. Having students actively practice new vocabulary for themselves is the most beneficial way of helping them learn new words. It gives the students the skills they will need for their development of English outside of the classroom.