

Vocabulary Learning Strategies

Students may find the following strategies helpful when **building vocabulary**:

1 Choose a consistent method for recording new vocabulary that makes it easy to retrieve and re-use. This might include one or more of the following suggestions:

- i. note new words in a separate vocabulary booklet
- ii. record new language at the back of an exercise book with separate topic pages
- iii. highlight key, new vocabulary in an exercise book, using a text book in a different colour pen

2 Consider vocabulary as a treasure trove. Take care to record it accurately, and signpost it usefully so that you can return to it later and still understand it. This might include:

- i. writing the English and the Swahili
- ii. noting the class of nouns
- iii. noting characteristics of verbs (regular, irregular (with details of how))
- iv. forms of adjectives
- v. writing an example of how the word can be used in a sentence

3 Vocabulary will most often be encountered within a specific theme or topic, but there are high-frequency words that transcend topics and could be noted separately. For example:

- i. time expressions
- ii. opinion phrases
- iii. prepositions
- iv. most common adjectives
- v. conjunctions

Some topics require students to **re-activate prior vocabulary**. In those situations, these strategies may be helpful:

1 With a set of vocabulary provided by the teacher at the start of a new topic, students rate their own vocabulary knowledge. For each word, they ask:

- i. Do I know what it means when I see it?
- ii. Can I pronounce it?
- iii. Can I spell it correctly?
- iv. Can I use it in a sentence?

For any words that rate lower than 3 students undertake one of the learning strategies for new vocabulary described below.

2 Students are given a set of previously-learnt vocabulary related to a topic (e.g. school) and asked to categorise it, either as an open-ended task, or with specific categories (e.g. subjects, opinions, buildings, rules).

3 When introduced to a new topic, students are first given one minute to generate a list of any vocabulary they know related to the topic. Students exchange lists, and use a second minute to add any words to their partner's list.

4 At the start of a new topic, the teacher shows a video clip (muted) which is relevant to the new context. Students write down any Swahili words they can in response to the clip.

5 Before embarking on a new topic, teachers set a 'flipped learning' style homework, whereby students revise a set of vocabulary items, using an online vocabulary learning tool. This enables the teacher to begin the teaching from the point of using the vocabulary, rather than presenting it again in class.

6 Present previously-learnt (but largely forgotten) language by asking students to generate the meaning of each key word themselves (either by drawing a representation or writing what they think it means). Then reveal the meanings and ask students to correct their drawings/written versions.

7 Students go back to a previous vocabulary list and choose 15 words. They create two or three revision activities for a partner, using those words. They could use these ideas, or more of their own:

- missing letters
- odd one out
- definitions

When **learning vocabulary**, students may find these strategies useful:

1 Look, say, cover, write, check.

2 Write sentences using the key words you want to learn.

3 Use colour coding (e.g. to categorise words to help you remember them).

4 Make a word game – write words in English and in Swahili on paper, cut them up, and match pairs together.

5 Use traffic light colours to show what you do know and what you don't know, e.g.:

Red light = I don't know what this verb means or how to spell it.

Amber light = I know what this word means but I can't spell it or use it in a sentence.

Green light = I know this word. I can spell it and use it in a sentence.

For the words in your 'red' list, do some independent learning. Combining seeing, listening and doing strategies makes memorising more effective. Try one or more of the strategies in this list.

6 Teach a friend or family member some words.

7 Create pairs of rhyming words to learn.

8 Strengthen the 'fixative' power of learning by using gesture, sound and picture to embed new language.

9 Use music and rhythm in memorisation of key structures.

10 Put students frequently in the situation where they need to retrieve language from memory, but keep the link to meaning. E.g. Mini whiteboard Q&A, sentence-completion, translation –cued by pictures, gestures, English. Also works orally.

11 Use peer tasks to make over-learning varied and enjoyable, either Q&A style such as ***speaking lines***, or ***peer testing*** style, where one has access to the answers.

12 Use mnemonics (e.g. keyword, word association, first letter, acronyms, acrostics, roman room).

13 Use online resources to engage in active learning. Use an app to record yourself saying the TL words and their English meaning – use this to test yourself.

Remember: Make some online flashcards and then play the games and activities created with them

Elaboration is the key! Doing something active to re-work the language over and over is how to fix it in long-term memory.