

CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS IN IMPLEMENTING THE MEANING-FORM-PRONUNCIATION (MFP) FRAMEWORK FOR VOCABULARY TEACHING WITH UPPER GRADE ENGLISH LEARNERS.

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Annotation: *The article describes the essence of MFP (Meaning, Form, and Pronunciation) and the challenges associated with each component when implementing them with upper grade English learners. Additionally, it provides specific strategies to professionally address these challenges.*

Key words: *Meaning, form, pronunciation, syllable, stressed parts, unstressed parts, vocabulary, grammar, connotation, colligation, synonymous, denotational meaning, English orthography dictionary, a transitive verb, communication*

List of literature:

1. Jim Scrivener, Learning Teaching, 2005, p. 77
2. Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, 1970, p 80
3. Adrian Doff, English Training Course for Teachers: Trainer's Handbook
4. Demidova V, Khan S, Kurbanov O, English for teaching: Teaching for English, English Training Course, British Council 2011

As far as I know, many language teachers and learners often consider grammar to be a crucial aspect of language learning, and they certainly view it that way. However, based on my own experience, I can confidently say that vocabulary plays a far more significant role in the language learning, teaching, and studying process. Vocabulary encompasses all the words a person knows, learns, or uses, and it refers to the words commonly associated with a specific topic. Additionally, it can be found in a list of words with their meanings in a book designed for learning foreign languages.

Walking's says that without grammar little can be conveyed but without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed. And I think that is worth bearing in mind. In this article I'm going to be looking at what we need to consider when we're teaching vocabulary. So when we are teaching vocabulary what do we need to think about? What is going to be difficult for our learners? There's probably more to this than you've initially thought.

English has got a lot of words partly. Because they have invaded so many times and have adopted words from different languages. But the average native speaker knows roughly forty thousand words and probably uses in their regular basics only

between five or ten thousand words. If you look at all texts the most common hundred words make up about forty percent of everything. And if you know the most common seven and half thousand words that covers about 90 percent everything that you will see or hear. The problem of course, is that seeing a word, knowing a word means to know it in all contexts and one word doesn't necessarily have one meaning. After all, a single word can carry multiple meanings, shaped by its surroundings and the interactions in which it's embedded. As Paulo Freire so powerfully argues in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, understanding and learning are not just about passive reception of fixed meanings, but about active dialogue and mutual teaching. He writes: "The teacher is no longer merely the one who teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn, while being taught, also teach."²⁶ - Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 1970, p 80

So let's take a nice easy example to start with "mug" and your first thought is that it's a noun, a large cup with straight sides used for hot drinks. However, it

could be also a verb "to mug someone" (to attack or rob someone violently) and it also has other meanings as a noun, "an ugly mug" (someone's face), he is "such a mug" (a person who is stupid and easily deceived) and then you have got other related words like "mug shot", (A photograph of a person's face made for an official purpose, especially police records) and there are phrasal verbs like "to mug up on something" (to study or memorize something, usually in preparation for an exam or test). So the problem is that even something which seems quite simple on the surface has actually quite a lot of complexity and you dig down a bit. Because of this as language teachers we really need to think about the language that we are teaching at what aspects of it are difficult and problematic for learners. So that we can help them through this maze and we do this at the -pre teaching vocabulary stage. As with teaching any language system it's helpful to think of it in terms of meaning, form and pronunciation.

Starting to speak about problems related to meaning, it is possible to say that the best way to find the meaning is to use a dictionary. As Jim Scrivener beautifully notes in *Learning Teaching*, a dictionary is not just a list of definitions but a gateway to a richer understanding of words. He writes: "A dictionary is a tool for discovery, a bridge to the endless world of words, offering us not just the meaning of a word, but a doorway to its many layers, uses, and connections."
— **Jim Scrivener**, *Learning Teaching*, 2005, p. 5

²⁶ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 1970, p 80

By using a dictionary, not only will it give us a simple definition, but it will also help us see the most common uses of the word and the level at which it is usually taught. So there are a few problems.

Problem number one is that there's almost certainly more than one meaning of this particular word. We have to remember that it's a good idea to stick to one meaning at a time. If you are teaching the word at a higher level and you are comparing it with a meaning they already know that's great. But I wouldn't teach two different meanings at the same time just it's confusing.

Problem number two is some words have a particular connotation. As Jim Scrivener elegantly puts it in *Learning Teaching*: "Words are not just vehicles for conveying meaning but are laden with emotions, images, and associations that vary from culture to culture, person to person. Understanding a word's connotation allows us to unlock the deeper shades of meaning that help us communicate more effectively."

So they don't just have the denotational meaning. But there's also a kind of feeling about them one way or the other maybe positive maybe negative. So if you try sort these words into order of size which one's the tallest. You start to come across a few problems. For instance "lanky" word. It doesn't mean tall but it also means "tall" in a kind of "a thin way". And probably in a bit of negative way. So we need to make sure that our learners understand this. So they don't offend anyone.

Problem number three is that there are many words which are similar to each other, which are near synonyms. In some contexts they might mean an identical thing. But there are no words probably in any language which are exact synonyms. Which mean exactly the same in all contexts. Because what could be the point of having two words that we exactly the same. For example: "Big" and "large." Now in most contexts these are pretty synonymous. You could use one or the other and it wouldn't matter. But if you bought this "T-shirt" you maybe wouldn't say it was "extra big." And if you were talking to your five year old son and telling him he was going off to school now. You probably wouldn't tell him he was "a large boy" now. Important that your learners know what context they can use the word in.

Problem number four is about words that look or sound the same as each other. Some words have more than one meaning but the spelling and the sound is the same. We call these homonyms. This is an example "fan". First meaning (a device for creating airflow). Second meaning (an enthusiastic admirer). Other words sound the same but have a dissimilar spelling, as well a meaning Here is another example we call these homophones. Word "which" (asking for information specifying one or more people or things from a definite set) "witch" (a mean or ugly old woman). They sound the same and then of course we have got these are less common that are written. The spelling is similar but the sound is dissimilar, so these are homographs. Think about "to read" The

simple past tense of the verb “read” is “read”(I read this book last week). While “read” is spelled the same in both its past and present forms, its pronunciation differs depending on the tense. So we need to consider these anticipated problems when we are teaching lexis. Not all words have these issues, but these are things we should be aware of and pay attention to if they cause problems with certain words when teaching them.

Coming to the problems with form, I would say that spelling of course, is the big one. English is infamous for its irregular orthography. For instance, **Henry Sweet**, a philologist and linguist, once remarked on the difficulties posed by English orthography: "English spelling is notoriously erratic, and a great part of the confusion lies in the fact that words are often spelled as they were centuries ago, without regard to modern pronunciation."

Look at these words. If this is **though** why does this say “cough”. And if this is below why does the same [o] sound have this spelling in code. Another problem with form to look out for is irregular plurals. So we have got “mouse” and “mice”. But not “house” and “heists.” These are not very common in English. But some of the ones which are very common words. English has irregular plurals, such as “man” becoming “men” and “woman” becoming “women” as well as changes in pronunciation, like “child” becoming “children” and “person” becoming “people”.

So if there are irregular plurals then learners need to know about that. If we are talking about plurals there’s also the small matter of whether something is count or non-count if it’s a noun. Learners are prone to make mistakes with words like no advice advices, no fish fishes no and this might be because they don’t know they are non-count or because in their native language they are countable nouns. Problems don’t only arise with nouns for example, you can also encounter issues with verbs.

You need to make sure that they know if there’s an irregular past tense and past participle. So if you teach “swim”, they need to know if they did it yesterday. It’s “swam” and that they “have swum” in a river in the past.

If you’re teaching adjectives. Then you will often find that the opposite will be formed with on unhappy. For example, but what about dishonest, illegal, imperfect so if there are irregular then your learners need to aware about it.

Finally, for learners to effectively use a word, they need to understand the words that commonly accompany it. This is known as collocation and colligation.

In "English Training Course for Teachers: Trainer's Handbook", Adrian Doff mentions both concepts as essential tools for teachers when developing vocabulary skills in learners. He explains:

"Collocation helps learners sound more natural in their use of English, as they begin to use words in the ways that native speakers do. Colligation, on the other hand, is essential

for understanding how words behave within specific grammatical structures, which is crucial for accuracy."²⁷

Collocation refers to the words that naturally go together with a specific word. For instance, we say "Happy New Year" but not "Happy Christmas." Why is that? It simply doesn't collocate in English. It's also important to consider the types of words we need to teach alongside a word. For example, when teaching the word "job" it's useful to also teach phrases like "part-time-job" or "full-time-job."

Colligation refers to the grammatical structures that are associated with a word. For example, when teaching the word "love," it's important to ensure that learners understand it needs an object. As teachers, we know this is called a transitive verb, though I wouldn't necessarily teach that term to my students. However, they should know that we say "I prefer coffee," "I prefer travelling," or "I prefer winter," not just "I prefer" on its own.

Consider words like "to warn" When teaching this word, you need to think about what words should be followed after "warn. For example, "I warn you about the changeable weather" or "I warn that the weather is scorching». There are several options that can follow, but you can't just say "warn driver" These are some of the issues learners might encounter with the form of vocabulary, which we need to consider. As you can see, there's quite a bit to think about, and remember, not all words will have all these issues. However, these are things worth considering when planning.

We've looked with issues meaning and form and so the final aspect of vocabulary that we need to consider is the pronunciation. His views on pronunciation could be expressed: "Pronunciation is not just about making sounds; it is about shaping communication in a way that allows others to understand us. A good pronunciation model enables learners to feel more confident and be understood in different contexts, helping them engage in conversations naturally and clearly."

Obviously learners need to know how to say a word if you're going to be able to use it. There are also a few pronunciation problems to consider. We've already mentioned spelling, and in many cases, it can mislead learners about how a word sounds. For example, the word "enough" might lead learners to mistakenly pronounce it as "bow." The letter "o" typically has the "a" sound as in "cat," but in this word, it has the "o" sound as in "was," and in other words, it might be pronounced as "are" in "last." Learners need to be aware of this. Another issue with pronunciation is word stress. In English, polysyllabic words don't have a regular stress pattern, unlike in some other languages.

Jim Scrivener, in "Learning Teaching", emphasizes the role of polysyllabic words in effective communication:

"Polysyllabic words often present more challenges in terms of stress, rhythm, and pronunciation. Teaching students how to break down these words into syllables can

²⁷ **Adrian Doff**, English Training Course for Teachers: Trainer's Handbook

greatly improve their confidence and clarity in speaking."

You need to ensure that learners know where the stress falls in words, as this can make a significant difference. For example, the word "important" is stressed on the second syllable, but if you stress the first syllable, it sounds quite different. There are some regular patterns, such as all words ending in -(t)ion (regardless of spelling) having stress on the penultimate syllable, just before the "shun" sound. Think of words like "motivation" "celebration" and "invitation." These patterns are useful to teach, but there are many more patterns to be aware of.

So you can't teach them all and there lot of exceptions too. So when you are teaching a new word you need to make sure that the learners know where the stress lies. **Jim Scrivener**, in "Learning Teaching", explains the importance of stress in pronunciation:

"Stress is a fundamental aspect of rhythm in English. It shapes the way we speak and can affect the meaning and understanding of words, especially when it comes to words with similar roots but different stress patterns."

— **Jim Scrivener**, Learning Teaching

There are also problems with some words with shifting stress patterns depending on the form of the word. So this is "a record" but (I bought a record), as a verb "to record" (I will record the event) i. The stress isn't the same. Have a weak vowel sound as well. For example this is annoyed because the stress is not there is not annoyed. By this time you might be thinking that it's going to take you forever to teach even a small amount of vocabulary. So the next question is do they need to know all of this. All of the vocabulary that you're going to teach. This is where your judgment as a teacher comes in. So if you are teaching words for receptive purposes for them perhaps just to understand it in a reading or a listening text. Then obviously they don't need to know very much. They only need to know what the word means in that particular context. But if you want them to use the word for productive purposes then obviously they need a lot more information.