

AN EXPLORATION OF VOCABULARY TEACHING IN
PRIMARY SCHOOLS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE
TO GRADES ONE AND TWO

BY
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JUNE, 1998

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APPROVED BY

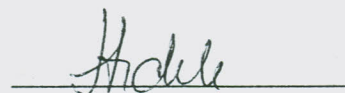


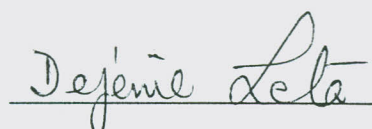
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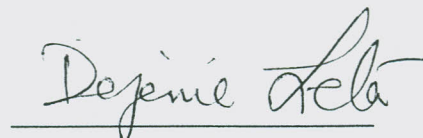


Examiner





Examiner



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ABSTRACT

The study is carried out in primary schools, which have not been given due attention. More specifically, it attempts to explore the teaching of vocabulary in grades one and two.

The subjects of the study, teachers as well as students, are from old and well established government primary schools in Addis Ababa. The data for the study are collected from a questionnaire, classroom observations, interviews and a vocabulary test.

First, data are collected from the questionnaire distributed to teachers. Then teachers are interviewed on their use of the different techniques of vocabulary teaching. Subsequently, teachers are observed teaching vocabulary. Students are also asked what their reaction to vocabulary teaching is, after the observations. Finally, students are given a vocabulary test to find out how effective the techniques used by teachers in teaching vocabulary are.

The data collected from the questionnaire, the classroom observations and the test are seen in relation to one another to find out which techniques are more frequently used and more effective in teaching the meaning of words in grades one and two.

The findings show that pictures, picture cards, blackboard drawings and real objects are more frequented and effective techniques of vocabulary teaching in grades one and two. On the bases of these findings, it is recommended that, since they are teaching young children, teachers in grades one and two should use real objects (realia) as most of the vocabulary items in the syllabi can be better taught this way.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE PROBLEM, SIGNIFICANCE AND DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Learning a foreign language is basically a matter of learning the vocabulary of that language (Wallace, 1982). And learners feel that their language difficulties result from inadequate vocabulary (Nation, 1990). Emphasizing the importance of vocabulary vis-a-vis grammar, Harmer states:

If language structures make up the skeleton of language, then it is vocabulary that provides the vital organs and the flesh (1991: 153).

However, this important skill in foreign language learning was neglected for a long period of time. In the 1940's more focus was given to the sound systems and grammatical structures of a language than to its vocabulary (Fries, 1945). Allen (1983: 1) notes:

Some books appeared to be telling teachers that students could learn all the words they needed without help. In fact, teachers were sometimes told that they ought not to teach many words before their students had mastered the grammar and sound of the language.

In the 1970's more emphasis was given to vocabulary in foreign language teaching and learning (Wilkins, 1972). Without grammar, says Wilkins, very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed (1972: 111). As quoted in Carter and McCarthy (1988: 43), Twaddel's argument for the massive expansion of learners' vocabulary (1972 and 1973), the acceptance of reading's role in vocabulary expansion (Cannoly, 1973), the challenge to reinstate vocabulary teaching (Lord, 1974) and other scholars' support of vocabulary - Brown (1974), Anthony (1975), Nilsen (1976) - brought vocabulary teaching to the forefront.

Carter and McCarthy (1988: 44) say that by the mid 1970's they had a picture of a growing concern with vocabulary teaching and learning which, on the one hand, was concerned to redeem what had become a neglected area and, on the otherhand, to incorporate the insights of lexical semantics.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The incompetence of students in English at all levels is believed to have been caused partly by lack of adequate vocabulary. It may be assumed that in most government primary schools, where pupils in grades one and two are taught in self-

contained classes, teachers may not use effective techniques of teaching vocabulary.

There have been three studies done on vocabulary teaching here. All three of them have studied vocabulary teaching at three different levels. Dessie Berhane (1988) has studied how modern methods of vocabulary teaching are implemented in the Freshman English courses. Tesfaye Mahzentu (1990) has compared the vocabulary teaching techniques in the English for New Ethiopia text for grade four with selected current techniques of vocabulary teaching. Alemu Hailu (1994) has been mainly concerned with the teaching and learning of vocabulary using an awareness raising approach in high schools.

Grades one and two are the foundation for the primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education. And it is here that English language is introduced to young learners with the introduction of the vocabulary of that language. However, no study has been done so far either on the teaching of English or on the treatment of vocabulary in these grades.

The English language textbooks of grades one and two mostly contain speaking, reading and writing exercises. Students may not be given the chance to practise vocabulary.

Besides, teachers are strictly told to use only English during English lessons (teachers' books), thus discouraging the use of translation. The same is true with the other techniques of teaching vocabulary. There is no mention of employing the different techniques of teaching vocabulary in the teachers' books.

Interest has grown globally in the teaching of vocabulary. I, however, believe that this growing interest has not been well recognized here. There are no vocabulary lessons in primary schools. The textbooks do not give importance to vocabulary learning (see Appendix 1). Furthermore, as observed in my pilot study, I feel that primary school teachers in government schools in Addis Ababa are not aware of the importance of vocabulary in foreign language learning and because of this they do not use effective techniques of vocabulary teaching which would help students to learn and use words in the classroom.

The study explores how teachers deal with the vocabulary in the syllabus and which techniques they mostly employ in presenting meanings of words to their students.

1.3 Significance of the Study

The teaching of vocabulary has gained importance in the last two decades. And scholars advise teachers to use different techniques in teaching vocabulary which can help students to understand and retain as many words as possible (Wallace, 1982; Allen, 1983; Gairns and Redman, 1986).

This can however be accomplished when teachers use the techniques appropriate to that grade level.

The outcomes of this study can help:

- teachers to give due attention to vocabulary and to use different techniques appropriate to pupils in grades one and two;
- teacher trainers to train English language teachers in modern methodology of teaching;
- material developers to focus on vocabulary teaching and learning and to help pupils succeed in retaining and using basic vocabulary.

1.4 Delimitation of the Study

There are 228 government primary schools in Addis Ababa. The study focuses on government primary schools. It includes a population of 198 teachers from fifteen and 705 grades one

and two students from five old government primary schools. The government primary schools comprise of one quarter of all primary schools in Addis Ababa. The fifteen schools in the study embrace more than 25% of all the government primary schools here. I believe that it would have been more reliable to involve as many teachers and students as possible in the study had not there been a time constraint.

The study examines the teaching of vocabulary in primary schools. Teachers who were observed teaching were told about the purpose of the study. However, it cannot be said that they taught only vocabulary during the observation sessions.

The thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter One introduces the importance of vocabulary teaching as well as the statement, significance and delimitation of the study. Chapter Two reviews the literature pertaining to vocabulary teaching and learning with reference to younger children. The selection and presentation of vocabulary in grades one and two textbooks are also reviewed in this chapter. Chapter Three shows the methodology and procedure of the study. The results of the study are discussed in Chapter Four. Chapter Five concludes the study by giving recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

Vocabulary has a paramount importance in either acquiring one's mother tongue or learning a foreign language in the classroom. People do not necessarily need to know the structure of a language in order to communicate. They can communicate with one another if they know a certain number of words of the language they want to communicate with. That is why it is not unusual to witness people conveying messages and reach understanding using words not connected syntactically.

Having not enough knowledge of vocabulary of the target language can lead to misunderstanding between interlocutors. The source of many mistakes or of students being unable to express themselves is quite simply that they do not know the right words (Fowler, in Bowen and Marks, 1994: 91). And not being able to find words to express oneself may lead to frustration (Wallace, 1982).

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Cook (1976: 16) notes the importance of vocabulary as follows:

Whatever the function you're going to express, whatever the grammatical structure you're trying to use, you won't get very far without the right vocabulary. It's no use being able to request food in a restaurant if you don't know the word 'soup' or the word 'bread', or whatever food you actually need (Modern English Teacher, 8:3).

McCarthy (1990: VII) also emphasizes the importance of vocabulary:

No matter how well the student learns grammar, no matter how successfully the sounds of L₂ are mastered, without words to express a wide range of meanings, communication in an L₂ just cannot happen in any meaningful way.

Thus, knowing the vocabulary of a language is very important in order to understand or convey message in communication and to pursue and succeed in one's education. Hence, teachers need to be aware of this and give due attention to vocabulary teaching.

2.2 Teaching English in Primary Schools

2.2.1 Primary Education

I believe that it is wise to reach a consensus on the use of the term 'primary education'. Regarding the meaning of the term 'primary education' Stern (1967: XI) notes:

According to the Hamburg conference report the meaning to primary education has been explained as follows:

Primary education has different meanings in different educational systems. They fall, however, into two large groups:

1. Primary education as the minimum compulsory full time schooling. In this sense, it is also referred to as elementary education.
2. Primary education as one of the early phases of the educational process. 'Primary' in that sense is the education of younger children.

In this study, 'primary education' or 'primary school', or as is commonly known locally, 'elementary school', refers to the education of younger children.

In the Ethiopian situation, primary education is divided into two cycles or stages:

- first cycle, grades 1-4.
- second cycle, grades 5-8.

In the first two grades of the first cycle, there are children aged 6-11. For most of the pupils here learning English is a completely new experience and has to start from teaching the English alphabet. Pupils who learn English at this level need a number of the commonest vocabulary, either instructional or names of classroom and household objects, animals, colours, etc.

According to Freudenstein (in Jarvis and Kennedy, 1991) foreign language teaching at primary level has the following advantages:

- . intellectual improvement,
- . mother-tongue improvement, and
- . cultural gains.

To realize these and other advantages of foreign language teaching, pupils at the primary level must be taught vocabulary with effective techniques which help them to retain, remember and use words when necessary.

2.2.2 Language Teaching and Young Learners

Teachers who teach language to young learners should know the behaviours these learners have because of their age and act accordingly. Morgan and Rinvoluceri (1986: 8) say that younger learners are sometimes self-conscious in class, have short concentration spans, are easily bored and rarely see the wider relevance of learning a foreign language. On the short concentration span of children, Stern (1978: 169) states:

The limited span attention noted by Ginsberg in her 5-6 year olds learning English in Leningrad is found in all children. Consequently English 'lessons' must be short, though regular; twenty to thirty minutes each day is ideal for children between 5-7, and a longer daily period upto 45 minutes for older primary school children.

He further notes that it is advisable to turn every ten minutes or so from one activity to another during the classroom period so as to sustain the interest of children in each activity. Understanding children having short concentration spans and being easily bored helps teachers to use different techniques of vocabulary teaching which can motivate and interest young children to pay attention to the lesson at hand and gain from it.

Discussing the motivation of children and the need of changes of activities, Harmer (1991: 7) notes:

Children need frequent changes of activity: they need activities which are exciting and stimulate their curiosity: they need to be involved in something active (they will usually not sit and listen!) and they need to be appreciated by the teacher, an important figure for them.

Learning a language by children, by students in the university or by adults may not be the same because of their age, level of their education and their life experiences. Other factors may also be included here which show differences among them. Differences may also be seen among children themselves when learning a second language. Those who are exposed to the language before coming to school and those who have no experience at all may not equally be successful in the classroom.

For maximum language acquisition in the classroom, young children need to be exposed to a programme rich in meaningful real-life activities in which communication takes place naturally (Dunn, 1983: 3). And success in learning often depends on the number of senses which are used on the learning process. When students (specially young learners) can touch something in addition to hearing and seeing the word that names it, there is stronger chance that the word will be learned (Allen, 1983: 7).

So, in order to help children acquire more vocabulary, to use whatever they have learned in communication and to motivate them to learn English, the teacher has to use different techniques of teaching. The techniques which can be used by teachers in teaching vocabulary may depend on the ages of the learners and the nature of the items to be taught. The vocabulary children acquire or learn in primary classes has a clear, concrete denotation: something that can be seen or touched; nouns like desk, blackboard, table, chair, teacher, students; verbs like 'sit', 'stand', 'walk', 'write'; adjectives like 'big', 'small', 'round' and so on (Wallace, 1982: 18). Brewster et al. (1992: 64) also claim that it is important that children leave their first few lessons with some English to 'take away'. It is, therefore, useful to begin an

English programme by teaching children vocabulary for basic concepts, such as numbers, colours, and so on, which can provide the basis for subsequent activities.

2.3 Place of Vocabulary in Language Learning and Teaching

Henning, (in Celce-Murcia and McIntosh, 1979: 242), believes that one's learning of the terms and expressions of a language (i.e. its vocabulary) is fundamental even in the earlier stages of the acquisition of that language. Wallace (1982: 9) shares the same view when he says that there is a sense in which learning a foreign language is basically a matter of learning the vocabulary of that language.

Children who come to grade one are expected to learn the vocabulary of the English language along with the English alphabet. They learn the alphabet orally and in writing. However, in primary classes, there are no lessons assigned to vocabulary teaching. The pupils learn vocabulary incidentally when learning speaking, reading and writing.

2.3.1 Learning Vocabulary in the Mother Tongue and the Target Language

In order to communicate in one's mother tongue or a

foreign language, learning vocabulary is something inevitable. However, the learning process of the mother tongue and the target language may not be the same.

Allen (1983: 9) notes:

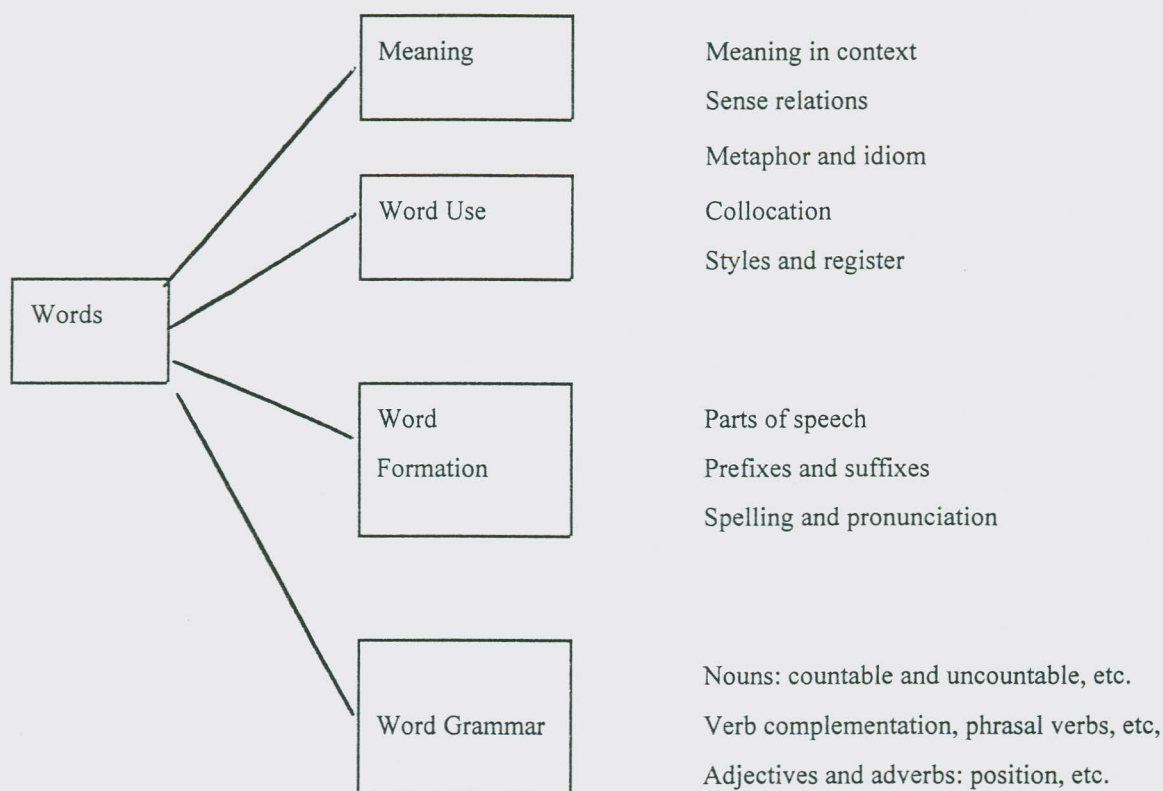
When a child learns words for familiar objects in the mother tongue, probably each word came to the child's attention as part of an experience that had special importance for him. Perhaps the words for 'window' and 'door' were learned when he heard an adult say (in the home language), "Grandma's gone, but we'll go to the 'window' and wave good-bye," and 'Daddy's here! Let's go to the 'door' and let him in." And it is through such day to day experience and need that children acquire words in their mother tongue.

Wallace (1982: 30) notes that 'knowing the words' in the L₁ being a matter of survival, the learners' control of his own rate of learning and his exposure to enormous quantity of language, the encounter with the language in an appropriate situation and context, and the clear denotation of words as the reasons for the achievement of a large amount of vocabulary in the mother tongue.

So, the need to learn a language, repeating whatever is learned, encountering words in an appropriate situation and words having clear denotation help a learner to acquire a language without too much effort. Teachers of English are expected to create a sense of need for words to help their

students learn more words and be able to communicate with them. Showing the relationship between mother tongue acquisition and learning a target language, Brewster et al. (1992: 12) note: One of the important lessons which can be drawn from the period of mother tongue acquisition is that it is clearly a pleasurable process because it satisfies, in a very short time, a child's basic need to communicate interactively with the surrounding people and environment. However, to satisfy this basic need to communicate the child needs to know the words in that language. But what exactly does it mean to know a word? According to Richards (1985: 183), knowing a word means knowing the degree of probability of encountering that word in speech or print, knowing the limitation imposed on the use of the word, knowing the syntactic behaviour associated with the word, knowing the semantic value of a word, knowing the underlying form of a word and the derivations that can be made from it, and knowing the associations between that word and other words in the language.

Discussing that knowing a word is far more than just understanding (one of) its meaning(s), Harmer (1991: 158) summarises 'knowing a word' as follows:



Though knowing a word can mean knowing its different uses, its formation or its grammar, the main concern of this study is to explore how teachers present the meaning of vocabulary in grades one and two.

2.3.2 Teaching Vocabulary

According to Cornu (Modern Language Journal, 1978: 262), vocabulary teaching encompasses two aspects. First, a correct and thorough presentation of the meaning of the words to be acquired is needed. Second, the organization of the teaching must be done in such a way as to improve retention.

The methodology teachers use in teaching vocabulary needs, to be a support for the learners' knowing, retaining and using of words. Teachers should bear in mind the level of their learners and be creative in using different activities to achieve the goal of vocabulary teaching, enabling learners to use the language. Brewster et al (1992: 31) tell us that teaching means facilitating discovery, not presenting knowledge. A pedagogy of discovery is one which allows full rein to the enormous potential with which, to varying degrees, children are naturally endowed.

Vocabulary can be taught along with reading or listening texts, as new words appear. Or, it can be taught as a lesson by itself. Discussing the unplanned and the planned vocabulary teaching, B. Seal, in Celce-Murcia (1991: 299-300) notes that there are two dangers in unplanned vocabulary teaching. One is that the teacher may not go far in dealing with the new word, and after the teacher's efforts, the students still do not understand the meaning of the word. The other is that the teacher may go too far and get carried away, devoting an excessive amount of time to the word and other related words.

Seal also says that there are two types of planned vocabulary teaching. The first is similar to unplanned

vocabulary teaching in that the words taught are incidental to the objective of the lesson. The teacher has predicted that certain key words are going to cause difficulty for the students and has devised an approach to deal with them in order for the rest of the lesson to proceed smoothly. The second type of planned vocabulary teaching can be described as 'the vocabulary lesson', since the primary objective of the teaching activities is the presentation and practice of the lexical items themselves.

2.3.3 Word Size in a Lesson

Teachers need to limit the number of new vocabulary items they teach per lesson. The limitation may depend on many factors. Some of the factors can be the level of the students, the aim(s) of the lesson or linguistic background of the students. Wallace (1982: 28) says that the actual number of words depends on a number of factors varying from class to class and from learner to learner. If there are too many new words the learner may become confused, discouraged and frustrated. And, any figure given without reference to a specific class or individual case will not be very reliable.

Regarding the minimum or maximum number of new words to present, so far no agreement has been reached yet. The reason

for this according to Wilkins (1972) is due to the fact that vocabulary size partly depends on the purpose for which the material is prepared, the situation in which the teaching and the learning is going to take place, the difficulty level of the words, the cultural diversity of the learners, the status of the language within that community, the development of instructional materials, the methodology incurred in the teaching and learning process.

Many scholars have indicated how many new words to be presented in a lesson. As quoted in Bogale (1993), West (1952) advocates for the inclusion of 4-6 new words in every section of a vocabulary building book. Of course, here we cannot be sure whether each section is taken as a lesson or not. Higa (1965) though has not mentioned the level of the learners, he suggests 5-7 new words in every lesson (Bogale, 1993). Finnochiaro and Bonomo (1973), discussing that there is no one answer on how many new words to be taught in one lesson, forward the following:

children 8/9 may learn 4/5 new words,

children 10/11 may learn 7/8,

secondary school students may learn 15-20 new words, while highly motivated university students may 'absorb' 30 or more.

As mentioned in Celce-Murcia and McIntosh (1979) Lozanov (1977) claims that in the suggestopaedic method about 200-240 new words are introduced in each 4 hour lesson. Meara (1980: 224) suggests that a vocabulary of 2000 words could be learned in eleven months at the rate of six per day (Bogale, 1993).

Wallace (1982) argues "If we mean by 'learn' that the words become part of the student's active vocabulary, then one estimate puts the number as low as around 5-7 new words". However, he suggests that if a teacher's evaluation of his students is for more input he can add new words from other sources.

Gairns and Redman (1986) suggest an average of 8-12 productive words, the lower figure as being more suitable for elementary students and the upper for more advanced learners.

Students in grades one and two are expected to study 150 words in each grade. They have 104 and 124 lessons respectively. This does not include the 28 radio lessons in each grade. The radio lessons do not introduce new vocabulary items. They revise what is already taught in the classroom. This means, they learn 1 or 2 new vocabulary items per lesson on average (Teachers Book, Grade 2, 1996). Compared to what

the scholars suggested, the amount of vocabulary students are given to study in grades one and two is much less than any of the suggestions.

2.4 Selection, Presentation and Evaluation of Vocabulary in Grades One and Two

2.4.1 Selection of Words

Teachers who teach in Ethiopian government schools do not select words to teach. A centrally prepared syllabus is distributed in the schools and teachers teach the vocabulary meant for each grade.

In both grades one and two, teachers are expected to teach 150 words in each grade. Most of the words refer to the objects in the classroom and in the house, people, animals, parts of the body and parts of the house, days of the week, numbers and colours. Furthermore, there is a list of 'Reading Vocabulary' in the syllabus, which students are expected to read 30 and 50 words in both grades respectively. The words are vocabulary items they have learnt and words with their different inflections. Regarding the word class of the vocabulary students are expected to study in both grades, the total percentage is:

Nouns	Adjectives	Verbs	Others
48.5%	15.9%	15.9%	19.2%

2.4.2 Presentation of Vocabulary

In the textbooks of grades one and two, there are 132 and 152 lessons respectively, of which 28 lessons in each grade are radio lessons. Each lesson is dealt with in one period of 40 minutes. Grades one and two have 5 periods of English language lessons in a week.

Each lesson has two or three sections comprise of speaking, reading and writing exercises (see Appendix 1). According to the teacher's books, the textbooks are to be used after using half of every period for oral practice.

On presenting of vocabulary items teachers are told to use objects, pictures and blackboard drawings. And they are to follow these steps (Teachers' book, Grade 2, 1996: xi) in presenting the new language items:

1. Create a simple situation which will help the students to guess the meaning of the new item;
2. Check that the students have guessed the meaning of the new item;
3. Ask the students to repeat them.

Eg.

1. Draw 'a lot of' 5-6 objects on the black-board: eg.
Lines, dots, numbers balls, chairs.
Make 'There are a lot of ...' sentences about the objects.
2. Check that the students have guessed the meaning of 'a lot'.
3. Ask the students to repeat 'a lot of' phrases.
A lot of lines, a lot of dots, etc.

2.4.3 Evaluation of the Vocabulary Lessons

Students in grades one and two should achieve some objectives by the end of each academic year. Using achievement charts teachers check whether their students have achieved the objectives. Half of the objectives students have to achieve refer to the vocabulary they have studied. For example, grade 2 students' objectives (Teachears' Book, Grade 2, 1996: xiii) referring to the vocabulary at that grade are:

1. I can name 20 objects.
2. I can count from 1 to 20.
3. I can name 8 parts of the body.
4. I can name 5 kinds of food.
5. I can name the days of the week.
6. I can write 10 words about myself.

2.5 Teaching the Meaning of Words

How do teachers present vocabulary to students? Teachers who teach vocabulary may employ different techniques. The techniques they use may help students to grasp meanings of words easily and to remember them for later use.

Karbal (1975) argues:

New words are best introduced to pupils in meaningful ways; not as a compendium of words on the chalkboard or in pocket charts, but by using methods which catch the attention and help the child retain them (Elementary English Journal, 52:3).

The techniques of vocabulary teaching can be divided into two major groups: visual and verbal.

2.5.1 Visual Techniques

The old saying 'a picture is worth a thousand words' seems to refer to the use of visual aids in teaching meanings of words. Bowen (1982: 1), discussing the great help of visual aids in foreign language learning, says that the student must use his ears as well as his eyes but it is the eye that is the primary channel of learning.

According to Calder (1966: 91), psychologists have found that 84% of what we learn we get from seeing; that 13% of what

we learn we get from hearing; and only 3% we learn in other ways.

Stevick (1982: 106) warns that "words and words, and words about words! That is what your classroom can become if you use nothing but a book. This is to say that teachers should use visual aids in teaching vocabulary.

The use of visual aids in teaching has a long history. Teachers use visuals because visuals, according to Saunders (1976: 16), arouse interest, can give accurate impression save teaching time and can stimulate the imagination.

Hubener (1960: 115) also asserts that visual aids contribute to the efficiency, depth, and variety of learning, offer a close verisimilitude of experience, tend to hold the interest and attention of the learner, by appealing to several senses they make learning more permanent and their aesthetic character makes learning pleasant and enjoyable.

Visual techniques in teaching vocabulary include the use of pictures, photographs, blackboard drawings, wall pictures and realia (objects themselves). All these are extensively used for conveying meaning at the primary level and are

particularly useful for teaching concrete items of vocabulary such as 'food' or 'furniture', and certain areas of vocabulary: places, professions, descriptions of people, actions and activities (such as sport and verbs of movement) (Gairns and Redman, 1986: 73).

2.5.1.1 Realia

It is obvious that, whenever there is a possibility, to use real objects in teaching is better than showing students the pictures of the objects. Allen (1983: 24) comments: "when there are real windows, floors, desks and clocks in the classroom, it is foolish not to use them in our teaching,".

2.5.1.2 Pictures

Photographs, picture cards, hand-drawn pictures, can all be included here. Pictures can substitute objects which are difficult to bring to the classroom (e.g. an ox, a train, etc.). They can also be obtained easily from old magazines and newspapers.

In teaching meaning of words, it is advisable to show several pictures to be sure that the students know what the teacher is referring to (Wright and Haleem, 1991: 51).

2.5.1.3 Blackboard Drawings

Because of the characteristics of the blackboard or the chalkboard, as it is called these days, drawings on it can help students understand meanings easily.

Regarding the characteristics and techniques of the chalkboard and whiteboard, Wright and Haleem (1991: 5) list that the whole class can see it, texts and pictures can be erased, added to and substituted quickly, and several people can work on the board at one time.

2.5.1.4 Wall Charts and Wall Pictures

A wall chart is a large diagram or picture display card. A wall picture, on the other hand, is simply a large illustration of a scene or event, or a set of scenes or events (Bowen, 1982: 5). According to Bowen, a feature which distinguishes a wall picture from a wall chart is the way each is used. Wall pictures are intended to be used with the whole class. Wall charts are for the most part unsuitable for whole class teaching because they are usually complex, with printing too small to be seen by the students from their seats. They are ideal, however, for pair or group work in intermediate and advanced classes (1982: 15).

2.5.1.5 Mime and Gesture

Teachers may encounter new vocabulary items which cannot be taught with the help of pictures. Explaining them may also be somewhat difficult. In such a case the teacher can mime and gesture. The words, of course, have to be appropriate to be mimed or gestured.

According to Gower et al (1995: 11), gestures and facial expressions are an integral part of any communication where people listen and speak. They help us get across what we want to say. They note that teachers can use gesture and mime to convey the meaning of language, to manage the class, to add visual interests and to cut down on the amount of verbal explanation. Harmer (1991: 161) tells us that actions are probably better explained by mime.

2.5.2 Verbal Techniques

Defining words, using sense relations and translation are included in the verbal techniques in teaching the meaning of words.

2.5.2.1 Definition

In teaching new vocabulary items, teachers define or explain to make them clear to their students. Usually, the new

words are defined using words already known by the students.

On using definition Gairns and Redman (1986), state:

Definition alone is often inadequate as a means of conveying meaning and clearly contextualized examples are generally required to clarify the limits of the item. For example, 'to break out' in 'a fire breakout' has the sense of 'to start', but this would be a misleading definition for a learner and might encourage him to think that 'the lesson broke out' was acceptable English (p.74).

2.5.2.2 Sense Relations

In teaching the meanings of words, the use of sense relations helps learners to grasp meanings and relations among words. The meaning of a word can only be understood and learnt in terms of its relationship with other words in the language.

2.5.2.2.1 Synonymy

McCarthy (1990) states that many words in English appear to have similar or close meaning to each other. This existence of meaning similarity or closeness between or among words is called synonymy.

Many words in English appear very close in meaning to each other. For example, 'begin' and 'start', 'sofa' and 'settee', 'below', 'beneath' and 'underneath' are a few of the many hundreds of words that seem to be frequently used interchangeably without loss of meaning (McCarthy, 1990).

Carter (1987) states that the term 'synonymy' is essentially a bilateral or symmetrical sense relation in which more than one linguistic forms can be said to have the same conceptual or propositional meaning. Gairns and Redman (1986: 15) seem to agree with Carter when they say that synonyms are groups of words that share a general sense so may be interchangeable in a limited number of contexts but which on close inspection reveal conceptual differences. However, McCarthy (1990), Gairns and Redman (1986) emphasize that it is unwise to expect any items to be exact synonyms. It is rarely the case that two words will be synonymous on every occasion -if they were, there would be little need to have both words in the language. So, when we use the term synonymy it is only partial synonymy.

2.5.2.2.2 Antonymy

This refers to the idea of semantic oppositeness or unrelatedness. Carter (1987) says that there are certain demarcations within antonymic sense relations. Similarly, Gairns and Redman (1986: 24) state that there are a variety of different forms of oppositeness which are relevant to learners and teachers and explain them as follows:

- i) Complementaries (also called 'binary antonyms' or 'binary taxonomy') are antonyms that truly show oppositeness of

meaning. They are not possibly graded. "If one of the pair is applicable, then the other cannot be. They are said to be exclusive." (Gairns and Redman, 1986: 25).

Eg. Mr. X is male. Mrs. Y is female.

ii) Converse

This refers to reversible lexical relationship such as husband/wife, where to say John is Mary's husband is to say Mary is John's wife.

Converseness is seen to contrast with complementarity in that there is interdependence of meaning. Buy/sell would be another example which involves greater grammatical change.

Eg. John sold Mary a pen.

Mary bought a pen from John.

iii) Gradable antonyms (also 'gradable opposites', polar opposites' and 'antonyms').

Sue's house is big.

Mary's house is small.

Are 'big' and 'small' opposite? They are not opposites in the same way as 'male' and 'female' are. In the first place, Sue's house is 'relatively' big, compared with her old

house. Mary's house may be 'relatively' small in the light of the same factors. 'Big' and 'small' form part of a scale of values which will include some of the following.

NORM/AVERAGE

huge/very big/BIG/quite big/medium sized/quite small/SMALL/tiny

iv) Multiple incompatibles (also multiple taxonomy)

These are sets of miniature semantic systems which are of interest to teachers and learners as they are easily memorable.

Some of these are closed systems, like:

Spring	Summer
Autumn	Winter

Using one item from the set excludes all the other in the same systems. Some are of 'open-ended' systems. These are of course, further examples of super-ordinates and hyponyms.

Vehicles: Car, bus, van, etc.

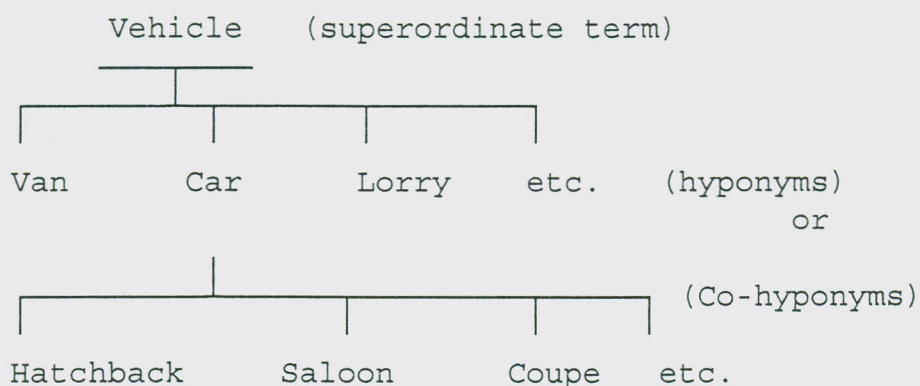
Flowers: lily, daffodils, geranium, etc.

Tools: screw driver, hammer, saw, etc.

2.5.2.2.3 Hyponymy

Hyponymy refers to the relationship of inclusion. Grouping lexical items according to their semantic similarities helps learners to see the relationship between words. Using hyponymy, it is possible to organize words into taxonomies

which enables teachers to make them understandable to their students. For example, the meanings of the words 'car', 'lorry', 'bus' are included in the superordinate term 'vehicle', and in the same way the word 'fruit' includes hyponyms like 'orange', 'lemon' and 'apple'. As the word car is included in vehicle the word car includes other words like 'hatchback', 'saloon', 'coupe', etc. This can be shown clearly as given by McCarthy (1990: 19).



Regarding the relationship of hyponymy, Gairns and Redman (1986: 24) state, "It would not be accurate to say that 'fruit' equals 'orange', but we can say that the meaning of 'fruit' is included in the meaning of 'orange', and in the meaning of 'apple', 'pear' and 'plum'."

2.5.2.3 Translation

For making language learning easier, teachers translate words from the target language into the learners' mother tongue. According to Gairns and Redman (1986:30), most

learners find translation useful to make a conscious effort to link words between languages in this way, and in the early stages it is inevitable that they will do so.

There are several types of translation equivalent, some of which may be a very straight forward form of literal translation. However, many equivalents are only partially synonymous and teachers should be particularly sensitive to these differences if they are using translation for vocabulary teaching (Gairns and Redman, 1986).

Some books advise teachers not to use translation at all (Teacher's Guide, Grade 2). Some others advise to use it with care. Care is needed in using translation because there may not be a hundred percent match between a word in the mother tongue of the learner and its equivalent in the target language. Secondly, it might hinder students from using other more efficient ways of working out meanings of words. And finally, translation is applicable only with monolingual groups.

Harmer (1991) discusses the advantages and the disadvantages of translation:

Translation is a quick and easy way to present the meaning of words but it is not without

problems. In the first place it is not easy to translate words, and in the second place, even where translation is possible, it may make it a bit too easy for students by discouraging them from interacting with the words (p.162).

Gairns and Redman (1986) also express the disadvantage of too much use of translation:

If teachers rely too heavily on the use of translation and deliver most explanations in the mother tongue, their students are surely losing some of the essential spirit and atmosphere of being in a language learning classroom (p. 76).

Discussing that the use of the mother tongue, especially at the elementary stage, saves a lot of time, Wallace (1982) advises us that it should be kept under tight control (p. 48).

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURE

3.1 Methods

3.1.1 The Setting

The setting of the study is Addis Ababa Administrative Region. There are 228 primary schools in the five administrative zones of Addis Ababa. Out of these, 59 are government schools. The 59 government schools comprise 30% of the total number of primary schools in Addis Ababa (Addis Ababa Bureau of Education, 1998).

Table 1

Primary Schools in Addis Ababa

Zone	Govern- ment	Public	Private	Mission	Organi- zation*	Com- munity	Church	Mosque	Total
1	5	20	-	1	-	1	1	1	29
2	12	25	-	1	2	1	-	2	43
3	14	16	6	1	1	3	1	-	42
4	22	32	4	9	1	3	1	-	72
5	6	22	3	6	1	3	1	-	47
Total	59	115	13	18	5	11	4	3	228

* Organization refers to schools run by aid organizations.

3.1.2 The Subjects

The samples of the study were 198 teachers of 15 primary schools and 705 students of 10 sections in 5 primary schools. The sample schools were selected for their old establishment: 1932-1962*. I believe that these schools have experienced teachers and can be taken as reliable representative schools of the region.

Table 2

Government Primary Schools in Addis Ababa

Zone	Primary Schools	Number of Students						Sum
		Grade one			Grade Two			
		M	F	Total	M	F	Total	Total
1	5	990	1056	2046	903	1070	1973	4019
2	12	1814	2187	4001	1919	2014	3933	7934
3	14	2140	2404	4544	1810	2160	3970	8514
4	22	2825	3260	6085	2652	2907	5559	11644
5	6	1022	1157	2179	944	1118	2062	4241
Total	59	8791	10064	18855	8228	9269	17497	36352

Source:- Addis Ababa Bureau of Education, 1998.

The 15 schools selected for the study hold 35% of all government school students. The list of old schools from each zone was given to me by the Addis Ababa Administrative Region Bureau of Education. Out of the 15 schools 5 were selected for classroom observation, one from each zone.

*All years are in the Gregorian calendar.

Table 3

Government Primary Schools Included in the Study

Zone	School	Established in	No. of Sections Grades 1+2	No. of Students Grades 1+2
1	1. Yekatit Hayasost	1950	19	1519
	2. Edget Besira	1956	10	689
2	3. Edget Behibret	1946	10	560
	4. Biruh Tesfa	1956	9	637
	5. Shimelis Habte	1945	9	648
3	6. Wondyirad	1947	20	1242
	7. Sibistie Negasi	1950	12	815
	8. Misrak Ber No.1	1964	12	994
4	9. Kuskum Taytu Bitul	1933	12	854
	10. Kokebe Tsibah	1932	19	1034
	11. Tinsae Berhan	1943	8	299
	12. Misrak Goh	1946	16	806
	13. Entoto Amba	1950	20	1221
5	14. Medhanealem	1957	12	643
	15. Meskerem Hulet	1962	10	622

Table 4

Primary Schools Observed in the Study

No.	Zone	School	Sections Grade 1+2	Number of Students Grades 1+2
1	1	Yekatit Hayasost	19	1519
2	2	Shimelis Habte	9	648
3	3	Misrak Ber No.1	12	994
4	4	Entoto Amba	20	1221
5	5	Meskerem Hulet	10	622

3.1.3 The Questionnaire

Questionnaires were distributed to 198 teachers of grades one and two the selected 15 government primary schools. The questions in the questionnaire were designed to find out which of the techniques of vocabulary teaching were frequently used and to what extent they were employed and which were the least employed. The items in the questionnaire were divided into two major groups: visual and verbal. Some of the visual techniques included in the questionnaire were: real objects, pictures and blackboard drawings. The items included in the verbal techniques were: synonymy, antonymy, translation and hyponymy (For the questionnaire see Appendix 2).

3.1.4 The Interviews

By looking at the response to the items in the questionnaire, I used unstructured interviews to collect more data on the use of vocabulary teaching techniques. The interviews were mainly based on the teachers' response to the questionnaire. Students were also interviewed to find out their reaction to vocabulary learning and the techniques their teachers used in teaching them vocabulary.

3.1.5 The Observation

I observed teachers teaching English in their classrooms. The aim of the observation was to find out how teachers deal with the vocabulary they were meant to teach. An observation checklist was used to find out what techniques were used in teaching vocabulary (see table 5).

3.1.6 The Test

A test was administered to students in those sections which were observed. The aim of the test was to find out how effective the techniques used by teachers in different schools were. The effectiveness of their teaching techniques was thought to be seen by the meanings of words their students acquired (see Appendices 3 and 4).

3.2 Procedure

3.2.1 Stage 1

Teachers of grades one and two of the five schools were observed three times each, for a length of one period (40 minutes), within an interval of four days. One of the three observations was audio-recorded for further analysis. During the observation, students were interviewed to get additional information on vocabulary teaching. While observing, the following checklist was used to see what techniques teachers used to teach new vocabulary items.

Table 5

An Observation Checklist

Words		Techniques Used									
		RO	P	PC	WP	BD	MG	S	A	H	T
1.	Bag	√									
2.	Car					√					

Key: RO = Real objects; P = Pictures; PC = Picture Cards;
WP = Wall Pictures; MG = Mime and Gesture; S =
Synonymy; A = antonymy; H = Hyponymy; T = Translation,
BD Blackboard Drawings.

3.2.2 Stage 2

A questionnaire was distributed in the 15 schools for 198 teachers of grades one and two. A briefing was given to the coordinators of the respective grades on the items of the questionnaire. The coordinators were also requested to tell their fellow teachers that they should be genuine in filling out the questionnaire.

3.2.3 Stage 3

After they filled out the questionnaire teachers were interviewed to find out their attitude towards the items in the questionnaire and to vocabulary teaching.

3.2.4 Stage 4

A test was administered to 10 sections of grades one and two of the observed 5 schools. Then the results of each section of the respective grades were compared to see which techniques used by teachers were effective.

Table 6

Questionnaire Results

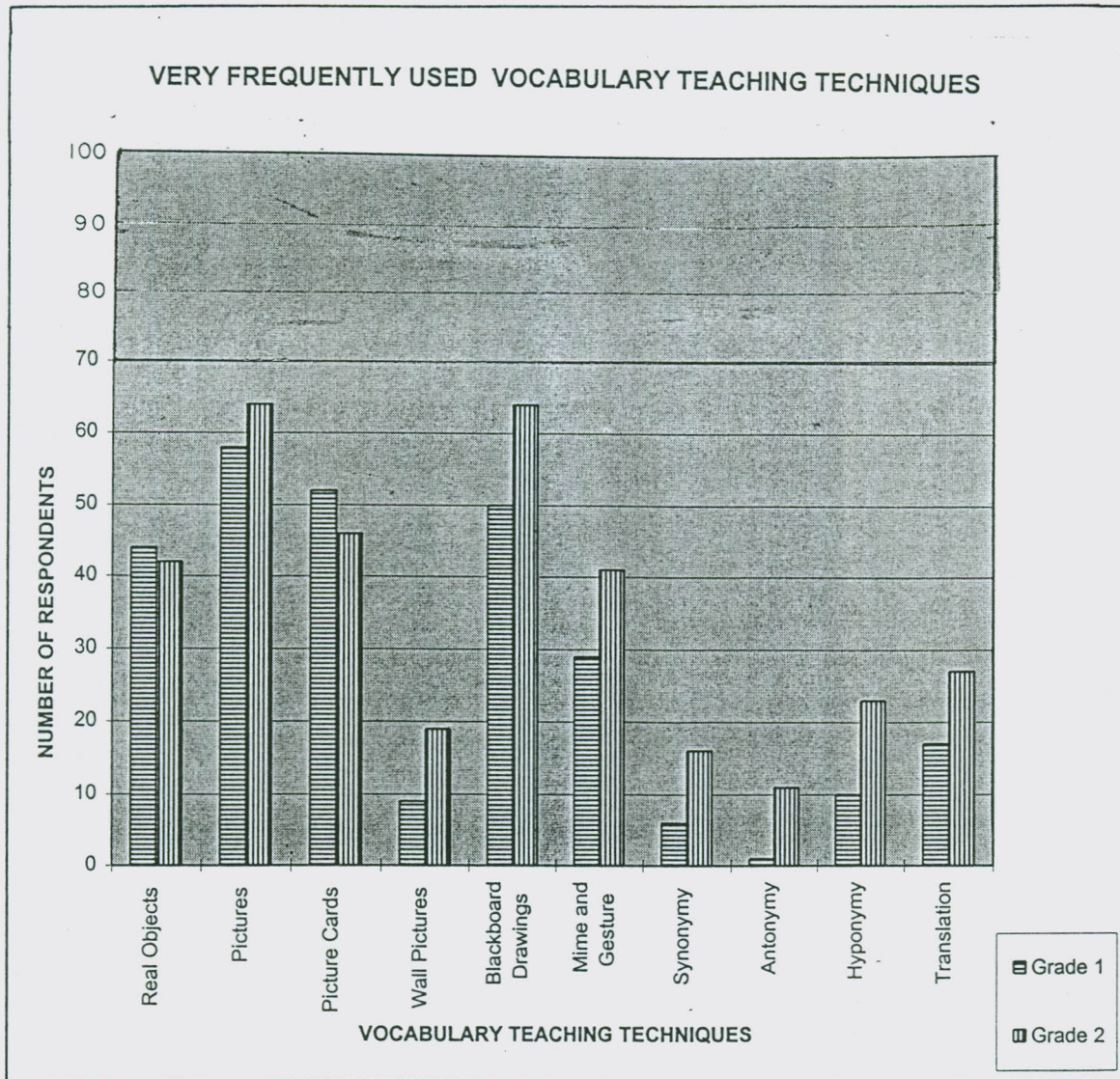
Vocabulary Teaching Techniques	Very Frequently			Frequently			Sometimes			Rarely			Never			Unattempted Items		
	Grades		Total	Grades		Total	Grades		Total	Grades		Total	Grades		Total	Grades		Total
	1	2		1	2		1	2		1	2		1	2		1	2	
Real Objects	44	42	86	36	38	74	4	19	23	1	-	1	-	-	-	4	3	7
Pictures	58	64	122	24	34	58	7	4	11	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Picture cards	52	46	98	17	20	37	14	27	41	-	4	4	-	-	-	6	5	11
Wall pictures	9	19	28	30	32	62	32	36	68	5	5	10	10	9	19	3	1	4
Blackboard drawings	50	64	114	14	18	32	22	14	36	-	4	4	-	-	-	3	2	5
Mime and Gesture	39	41	70	30	33	63	14	10	24	3	2	5	2	7	9	11	9	20
Synonymy	6	16	22	15	29	44	38	38	76	6	7	13	19	9	28	5	3	8
Antonymy	1	11	12	19	36	55	39	39	78	8	3	11	17	6	23	5	7	12
Hyponymy	10	23	33	32	37	69	26	30	56	10	9	19	7	1	8	4	2	6
Translation	17	27	44	5	4	9	36	32	68	27	34	61	1	3	4	3	2	5

Total number of respondents: 191 grades one and two teachers (89 grade one, 102 grade two teachers).

4.1.1 Most Frequented Techniques of Vocabulary Teaching

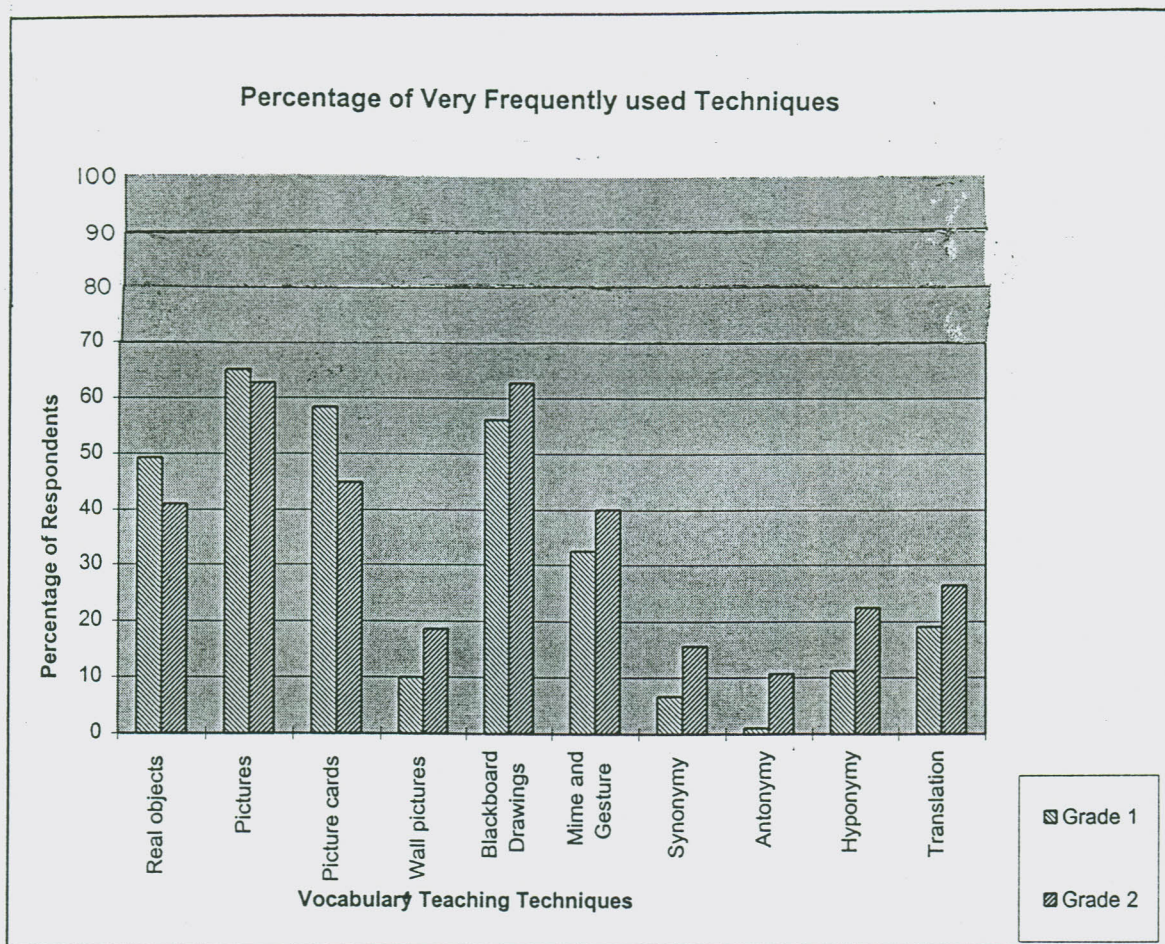
As shown in the table, it can be said that teachers use more visual techniques than verbal techniques in teaching the meaning of vocabulary in grades one and two. According to more number of their respondents, the most frequented visual techniques in these grades are the use of pictures, blackboard drawings, picture cards and real objects; of what the teachers responded to be using very frequently, using 'pictures' is the most prominently employed technique in both grades.

Table 7



Written in absolute number, teachers of grade two seem to use pictures more than teachers of grade one. However, due to the unequal number of respondents, 102 and 89, in grades two and one respectively, when taken in percentage the results show that pictures are more often used by grade one teachers than by grade two teachers.

Table 8



Though there is a slight difference in the percentage of its users, it is the use of pictures which comes at the top most rank in teaching vocabulary in both grades.

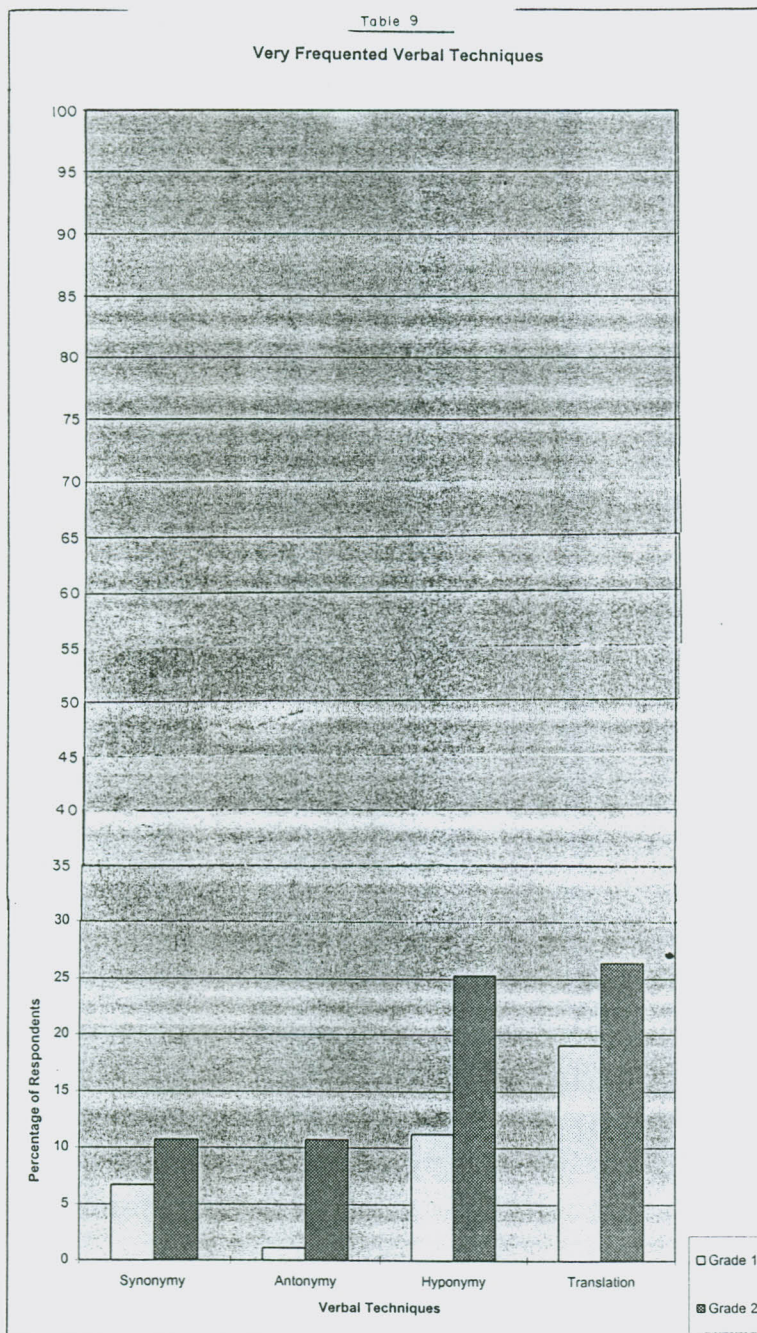
As seen from Table 6, the use of blackboard drawings shares the same rank with the use of pictures having equal number of respondents in grade two. If we consider both of them to be first in their rank order, then the use of picture cards comes next to them, which also stands second in grade one. Though the use of blackboard drawings has more percentage of users than the users of picture cards in grade two, it stands third in order. The next most frequented technique in both grades is the use of real objects. In grade one, the use of real objects has almost 50% of the respondents as most frequent users of the technique while in grade two it has a little over 40% (see Table 7).

From the number of their respondents in the 'Very Frequently' rating scale (see table 6), it can be said that the four most frequented techniques in teaching vocabulary to grades one and two are the use of pictures, picture cards, blackboard drawings and real objects in rank order.

knowledge of English before coming to school. Because, these techniques can help students to retain meanings of words long after their first encounter. Visuals tend to hold the interest and attention of the learner by appealing to several senses they make learning more permanent and their aesthetic character makes learning pleasant and enjoyable (Huebener, 1960: 115).

4.1.2 Most Frequented Verbal Techniques

In the results, there seem to be more use of verbal techniques in grade two than in grade one (see Table 8). Taken separately, the verbal techniques in the "Very Frequently" rating scale have the following picture:



Teachers' use of more verbal techniques in grade two could be attributed to the acquaintance of the students with basic vocabulary in grade one. This might encourage them to use verbal techniques more often along with the visual techniques.

Teachers in the primary school claim that most of their students come either from church schools or straight from home to grade one. This implies that the government school children at the beginning stage have only a mother tongue knowledge. In teaching English as a foreign language to children with no prior acquaintance with the language poses a problem, as most teachers interviewed in the study believed.

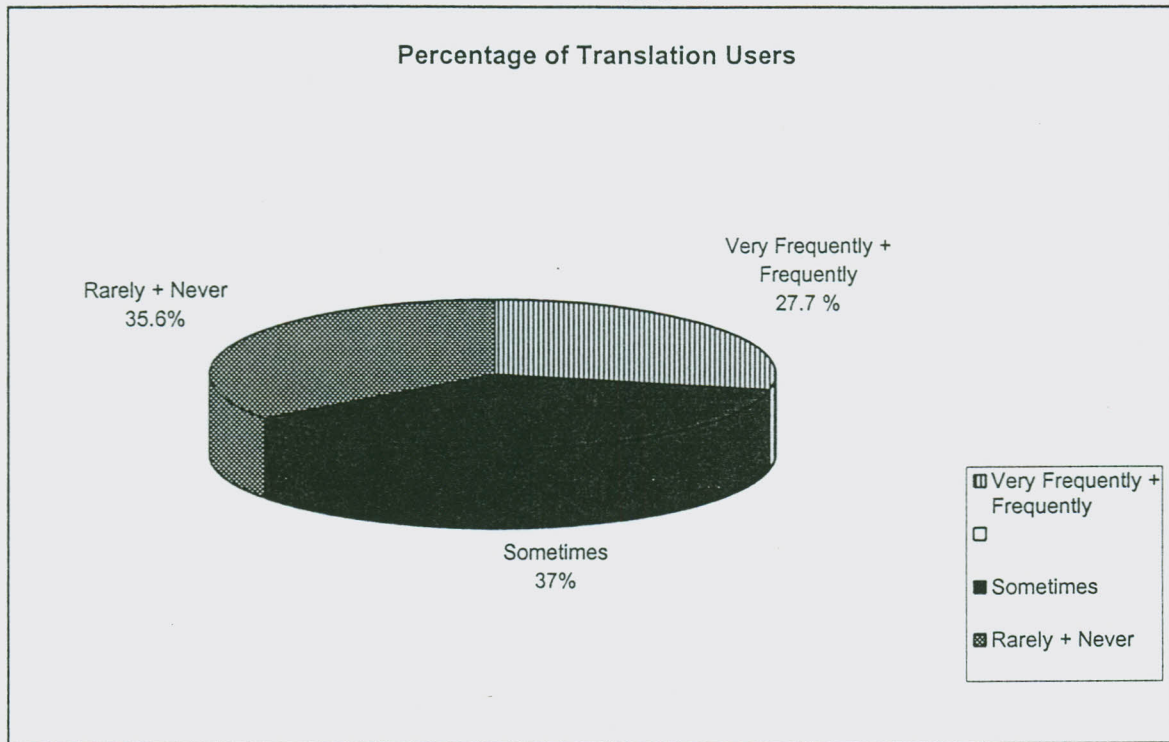
As seen in Tables 8 and 9, translation has the highest percentage of users in the 'very frequently' rating scale among the verbal techniques in both grades one and two. However, when compared with the visual techniques it will be rated higher than the use of wall pictures which has the lowest percentage of users in both grades. 'Wall pictures' has ranked only seventh out of the ten items in the 'very frequently' rating scale. Regarding the other rating scales on the use of wall pictures and other techniques, see Tables 10, 11 and 12.

I asked teachers if they really use translation to such a minimized extent in their daily lessons. They replied that

they used to translate meanings of words in the mother tongue, but recently they were told by inspectors not to use Amharic, when teaching English. The teachers' books, too, do not encourage teachers to use translation, which comes into conflict with the actual situation in the classroom and the background of the school children in government primary schools. (For students' response to the use of translation, see the results of observation p.59).

As can be seen from tables 9 and 11, with regard to the use of translation, the respondents who said rarely were higher in both grades than those who reported very frequently. In the 'very frequently' rating scale, the users of translation were 19.1% and 26.4% in grades one and two respectively, while they were 30.3% and 33.3% in the 'rarely' rating scale. However, when comparing the respondents who said 'very frequently', 'frequently' with those who said 'rarely' and 'never' on the use of translation, it can be seen that they were 27.7% and 34% respectively.

Table 10

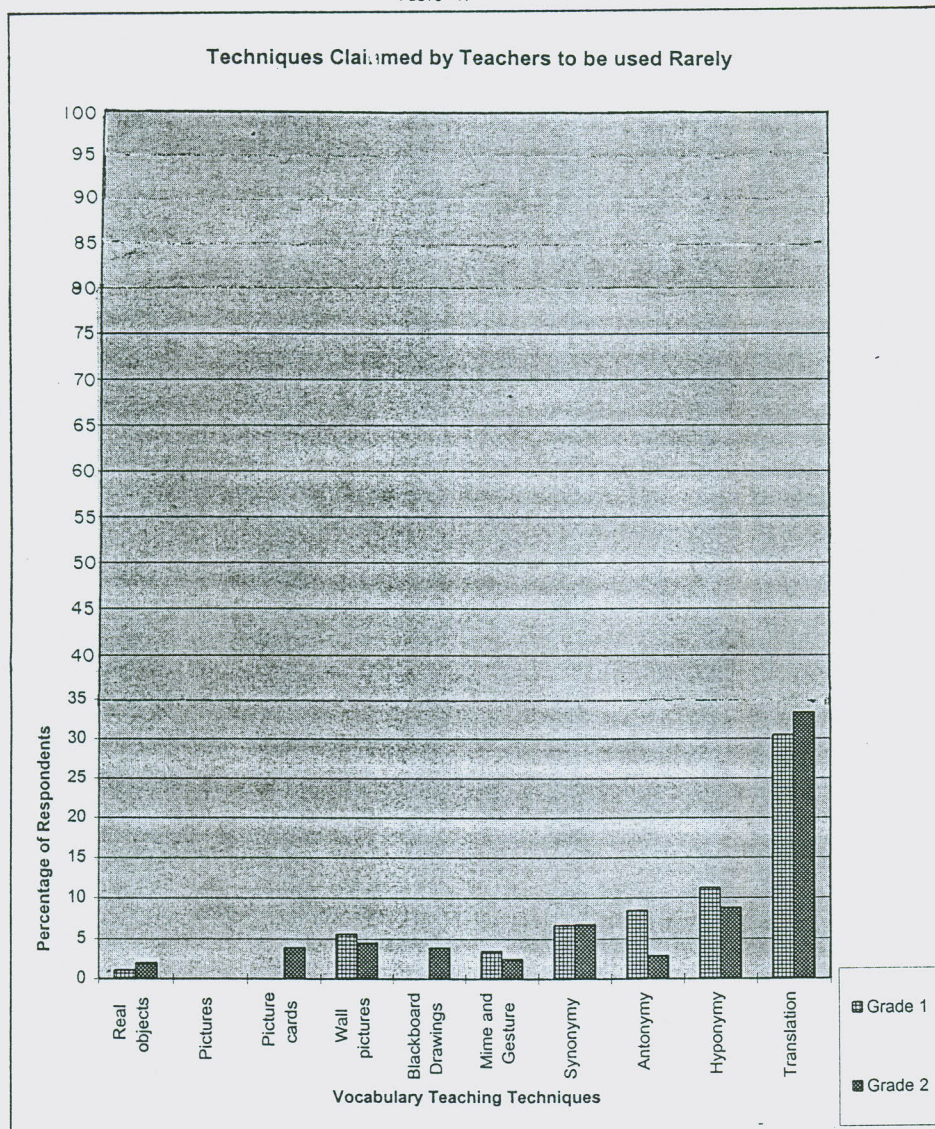


This means that there was a significant portion of population which used translation more often. The 'sometimes' rating scale taken as a category shows that 35.6% of the respondents were translation users (Table 10).

4.1.3 Rarely Used Techniques

Among the rarely used techniques, translation is at the top rank, followed by hyponymy, antonymy, synonymy, wall pictures, mime and gesture, blackboard drawings and real objects.

Table II



When we compare the visual and the verbal techniques which are rarely used, it seems that more verbal techniques were rarely used than visual techniques. Among the rarely used visual techniques, wall pictures has the highest percentage of respondents.

4.1.4 The Least Employed Visual Technique

More of the verbal techniques have the highest respondents when compared with the visual techniques in the 'rarely' rating scale. Among the visual techniques the use of wall pictures has the highest percentage of rarely users (5.2%). When the respondents in the rarely and never rating scales are seen together with regard to wall pictures, they comprise 15.1% of the total respondents (Table 11).

When teaching in large classes, where there is a shortage of textbooks and objects which help children understand the meaning of words, the use of wall pictures would have been ideal to use.

4.2 Observation Results

Five primary schools, one from each of the five zones, were selected for classroom observation. Two teachers of grades one and two from each school were asked for their consent to observations in their respective classes. They were told that the study was concerned with the teaching of meanings of vocabulary in grades one and two. Then agreement was reached upon the days they were to be observed.

During the three observation sessions in each of the ten sections of grades one and two, 83 vocabulary items were taught. Out of the 83, 83 and 64 vocabulary items were taught in grades one and two respectively. The total number of vocabulary items taught in both grades was 147. But, since many of the words taught in grade one were also taught in grade two their total number was brought down to 83.

The word class of the 83 vocabulary items taught during the observation is:

Nouns	Adjectives	Verbs	Preposition	Total
70	9	3	1	83

Though the observation focused on exploring the techniques teachers use in teaching vocabulary, it cannot be said that teachers were teaching only vocabulary during the observation. According to the teacher's book (Grade 2: vi) teachers are expected to teach and practise new language items in the first half of the period, i.e. 20 minutes. Teachers are also told to prepare flashcards and picture cards when teaching English in these grades.

The textbooks have one page for every lesson. As can be seen in Appendix 1, each lesson, (excluding the radio lessons), in the textbooks consists of 'speaking', 'reading' and 'writing' exercises. During the observations, teachers taught the meanings of words first, and then went to speaking, reading and writing exercises.

In dealing with the meanings of words, teachers used whatever techniques they had prepared beforehand. In the sections observed, both grades 1 and 2, teachers used visual techniques more often than verbal techniques. The visual techniques repeatedly used by the teachers during the

observation sessions were objects, pictures, picture cards and blackboard drawings. Wall pictures were only used by two teachers, one from each grade. 'Mime and Gesture' were never used by any teacher during the observation.

The verbal techniques were not used as often as the visual ones. The only verbal techniques used by teachers were antonymy and translation, where antonymy was used only once by one grade 2 teacher. Though there was a difference of frequency, translation was used by four grade one, and by three grade two teachers. Synonymy and hyponymy were the verbal techniques never used in teaching meaning during the observations. So, mime and gesture, synonymy and hyponymy were the techniques never used in teaching vocabulary during the observation sessions.

4.2.1 Item-Technique Relations

The items taught by each teacher in relation to the techniques used look as follows:

Table 13

Item-Technique Relations

Teachers	No. of Items	Techniques Used									
		RO	P	PC	WP	BD	MG	S	A	H	T
1A	16	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	13
1B	11	2	2	5	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
1C	18	3	8	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1D	18	8	3	-	-	7	-	-	-	-	2
1E	20	13	2	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	2
2A	13	-	4	-	-	9	-	-	4	-	-
2B	13	4	6	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	1
2C	15	-	15	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
2D	11	-	8	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	1
2E	12	-	6	5	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	147	31	56	21	3	21	-	-	4	-	21
%	100%	21%	38%	14.2%	2%	14.2%	-	-	2.7%	-	14.2%

Key: RO = Real Objects; P = Pictures; PC = Picture Cards; WP = Wall Pictures;
 BD = Blackboard Drawings; MG = Mime and Gesture; S = Synonymy; A= Antonymy;
 H = Hyponymy; T = Translation

The number of items, sometimes, may not be equal to the total number of items under the techniques, as in 1B, 1D, 2A and 2B, which is due to the use of two or more techniques in teaching the same item.

In the interview, teachers were asked why they did not use mime and gesture, synonymy, antonymy, and hyponymy. Their responses can be generalized as follows:

- We do not use synonymy because our students do not have adequate vocabulary to learn the meaning of one English word with another English word;
- We do not have synonyms for most of the words we teach;
- Since most of the words we teach are nouns, we prefer visuals to synonyms;
- Instead of using other words, it is easier to teach meanings using visual aids and translation;
- We sometimes use mime and gesture, it depends on the vocabulary we teach;
- We usually do not see words in relation to other words, we teach them as separate items;
- It is our first experience to learn about the use of hyponymy in teaching vocabulary.

4.2.2 Students' Reaction to Vocabulary Learning

Students were interviewed about their vocabulary learning, specially about the meanings of words they learned. The students replied that:

- their teachers used pictures and objects when teaching them vocabulary;
- they were told in Amharic the meanings of most words in the text;

- they took oral examinations (specially grade 1 students) being asked meanings of English words in Amharic;
- they preferred objects to pictures, when learning the meanings of words;
- they thought that they could learn more if words were taught vis-a-vis their antonyms and synonyms (grade 2).;
- they had problems in learning the meanings of verbs;

Since words appear again and again in their lessons, the students tend to know the meanings of most of them gradually.

4.2.3 Possible and Plausible Use of Techniques

While teaching the meanings of words, most of the teachers did not use more than one technique. Many of the words which could be taught using real objects, were taught in pictures or in translation. For example, sweater, skirt, ruler (1A) were taught using translation without trying to teach their meanings using any other technique. On the other hand, stone, arm and pencil (1C) were taught using translation and picture cards. Boy, girl and bag (1D) were taught using blackboard drawings.

When a teacher prefers one technique to another, it may be due to the level of the learners or the possibility of using

or availability of materials. However, when objects are available which can help students understand meanings of words easily, when teachers can use possible and available techniques which can show meanings of words clearly, teachers were observed using some other techniques which may be considered as 'last choice' techniques. Some of the vocabulary taught using such techniques vis-a-vis the possible techniques which could be used by teachers are shown in table 13.

Table 14

Possible and Plausible Use of Techniques Other than Used by the Teachers

Teacher	Item Taught	Technique(s) Used			Possible Techniques		
		1	2	3	1	2	3
1A	yellow	T			RO		
	blue	T			RO		
	black	T			RO		
	ruler	T			RO		
	sweater	T			RO		
	stick	T			RO		
	sit	T			MG		
	stand	T			MG	A	WP
	touch	T			MG	A	WP
1B	sweater	PC			RO		
	skirt	PC			RO		
	dress	PC			RO		
	stone	PC			RO		
	rubber	PC			RO		
	stick	PC			RO		
1C	stone	T			RO		
	arm	PC			RO		
	pencil	PC			RO		

Key: MG = Mime and Gesture; A = Antonymy; T = Translation; RO = Real Objects;
 WP = Wall Pictures; P = Pictures; PC = Picture Cards

Teacher	Item Taught	Technique(s) Used			Possible Techniques		
		1	2	3	1	2	3
1D	girl	BD			R0		
	boy	BD			R0	A	
	bag	BD			R0	A	
1E	sit	T			MG	A	
	stand	T			MG	A	
	shoe	P			R0		
2A	shoes	BD			R0		
	shirt	BD			R0		
	glass	BD			R0		
	big	P	A		R0	BD	
	small	P	A		R0	BD	
	tall	P	A		R0	BD	
	short	P	A		R0	BD	
2B	blue	P			R0		
	green	P			R0		
	red	P			R0		
	black	P			R0		
	sandals	P			R0		
2C	bag	BD			R0		
	duster	T			R0		

BD = Blackboard Drawings

Teacher	Item Taught	Technique(s) Used			Possible Techniques		
		1	2	3	1	2	3
2D	book	BD			R0		
	stick	P			R0		
2E	bags	PC			R0		

Key: MG = Mime and Gesture; A = Antonymy; T = Translation; RO = Real Objects;
 WP = Wall Pictures; P = Pictures; PC = Picture Cards

From the observation results it can be concluded that teachers used more visual techniques when teaching vocabulary. However, for an object which is easily available in the classroom or in the school environment, it is unwise to use a picture or a blackboard drawing, where a loaf of bread and a stone cannot be distinguished clearly, etc. Teachers are expected to use the textbooks and the pictures in the textbooks. But, the way they should impart their knowledge to children, specially teaching vocabulary to children aged 5-9, must bring into consideration the most possible means of helping students understand the meaning of words. This asks for the teacher's thorough preparation before hand. So, when there are real objects in the classroom it is really foolish not to use them in our teaching (Allen, 1983: 24).

The following words could be taught with the help of real objects which were available in the classroom or in the school compound.

Objects in the classroom: 'pencil', 'ruler', 'sweater', 'skirt', 'shirt', 'shoes', 'dress', 'bag', 'book', 'arm', 'boy', 'girl', 'sandals';

Objects in the school: stick, objects which could help the teaching of colours blue pen, blue sky, black hair, green grass, yellow flower, green, red, yellow, the Ethiopian flag.

These do not need to be taught with the help of other visuals.

Words like 'grandfather', and 'grandmother' could be taught using the hyponymy family or they could be taught using the students' real fathers, grandfathers and grandmothers. Instead of teaching the meaning of stand and sit using translation, mime and gesture would be of immense help here. Usually students stand up when a teacher comes to the classroom. After greeting they are told to sit down. This could give students a rich experience and meaning if the words were taught with these activities which students knew well. And this would help students to remember words by association thereafter.

In their responses to the questionnaire questions, teachers claimed to frequent pictures mostly, in teaching the meaning of vocabulary. Most of the teachers observed teaching

vocabulary also used pictures to teach meanings of vocabulary. As seen during the observation, and as can be seen from the textbooks, the pictures used to teach meanings are not printed or drawn in colour. Not coloured pictures may not interest children of 6, 7 and 8 years to learn meanings of words. And the pictures may not motivate them to know more words and their meanings.

If at all teachers opted for the use of pictures, I think, they could use pictures which can motivate young learners to know meanings of words. Coloured magazine or newspaper pictures can be obtained in Addis Ababa with a little cost.

In the teachers' books there are syllabi of vocabulary for both grades. The total number of vocabulary items in the syllabi are 288. Out of these 288 vocabulary items 53.8% i.e. 155 items, can be taught using real objects which are available either in the classroom or in the classroom environment. Table 14 lists the total number of items for each group and the items which can be taught using real objects (Teachers' Book, Grade 2, 1996: 156-157).

Table 15

Vocabulary Items which can be Taught Using Real Objects

I. Classroom Objects (16)		II Household Objects (17)
1. classroom	9. chalk	1. broom
2. bag	10. desk	2. brush
3. bell	11. duster	3. cup
4. bench	12. pen	4. glass
5. blackboard	13. pencil	5. picture
6. blade	14. rubber	6. plate
7. book	15. ruler	7. spoon
8. chair	16. textbook	8. table

III. Everyday Objects (11)

1. ball
2. basket
3. bottle
4. flag
5. flower
6. radio
7. stick
8. stone
9. tin

V. People (9)

1. children
2. boy
3. girl
4. man
5. woman
6. director
7. teacher
8. student

VII. Foods (8)

1. banana
2. oranges
3. bread
4. cabbage
5. carrots
6. eggs

IX. Parts of the Body (13)

- | | |
|----------|-----------|
| 1. head | 7. arm |
| 2. hair | 8. hand |
| 3. ears | 9. finger |
| 4. eyes | 10. leg |
| 5. nose | 11. foot |
| 6. mouth | 12. toe |

XI Nouns (8)

1. name
2. number
3. football
4. tree
5. shelf

IV. Clothes (11)

1. coat
2. jacket
3. sweater
4. dress
5. skirt
6. shirt
7. shorts
8. trousers
9. sandals
10. shoes

VI. Family (7)

1. family
2. father
3. mother
4. brother
5. sister
6. grandfather
7. grandmother

VIII. Drinks (4)

1. coffee
2. milk
3. tea
4. water

X. Parts of the House (7)

1. door
2. floor
3. roof
4. window
5. wall

XII. Numbers (20)

number 1-20

XIII. Adjectives (16)

- | | |
|--------------|-----------|
| 1. big | 10. full |
| 2. small | 11. fat |
| 3. tall | 12. thin |
| 4. short | 13. old |
| 5. long | 14. young |
| 6. clean | 15. my |
| 7. different | 16. your |
| 8. same | 17. his |
| 9. empty | 18. her |

XIV. Colours (8)

1. colour
2. black
3. blue
4. brown
5. green
6. red
7. yellow
8. white

Most of the verbs, numbers and other words, totally 54 of the items or 18.7%, can be taught using mime and gesture (Teachers' Book, Grade 2, 1996: 156-157).

Table 16

Vocabulary Items which can be Taught Using Mime and Gesture**I Verbs (44)**

- | | |
|-----------|-----------|
| 1. bring | 15. see |
| 2. count | 16. show |
| 3. dance | 17. shut |
| 4. draw | 18. sit |
| 5. drink | 19. sleep |
| 6. eat | 20. sing |
| 7. hold | 21. speak |
| 8. hop | 22. stand |
| 9. jump | 23. take |
| 10. open | 24. teach |
| 11. point | 25. touch |
| 12. put | 16. walk |
| 13. read | 27. write |
| 14. run | |

II Numbers 1-20**III. Other Words (16)**

1. quickly
2. slowly
3. round
4. yes
5. no
6. this
7. that

10.4% i.e. 30 items (15 pairs of words) can be taught using antonymy, one of the techniques least employed during the observation (2.7%).

Table 17

Vocabulary Items which can be Taught Using Antonymy

big/small	fat/thin	boy/girl
tall/short	old/young	man/woman
long/short	bring/take	father/mother
different/same	open/shut	brother/sister
empty/full	sit/stand	grandfather/grandmother

Regarding the size of words taught in a lesson, as seen during the observation, it was not less than the average. In grade one, 11-15 words were taught in the five sections in three lessons. In grade two, the number of words taught in three lesson was 11-20, in the five sections, (see Appendices 5 and 6 for the items taught)

So, on average, the number of items taught in a lesson was 4-5 words. West (1953) advocates 4-6 new words, Finnochiaro and Bonomo (1973) suggest 4-5 new words for children aged 8-9. Considering the number of words students are expected to study in a year, I assumed that they would learn 1-2 new words per lesson. However, during the observation it was seen that teachers teach 4-5 vocabulary items in every lesson. Hence, it can be said that the size of words teachers, in government

primary schools, teach in a lesson goes in line with what other scholars have suggested.

4.3 Test Results

A test was administered in order to see how effective each teacher's use of the techniques of vocabulary teaching was. Teachers in the observed sections were consulted on the purpose of the test and the test type before hand. In three out of the five grade one sections, students had no experience of taking tests in written form, whether matching or otherwise. They used to take their tests orally. Since all grade two and two grade one sections had the experience of matching words with pictures in their tests, the test administered for the study was set in the same way.

For those sections, who had never taken such a test, ample explanation with examples was given to help them do the test. They and the others were also given the chance to ask for more explanation even during the time of the test (for the test see Appendices 3 and 4). Since the purpose was to see the effectiveness of the techniques used in teaching vocabulary, there might not be a significant difference in their level of difficulty.

The number of students expected to take the test was seven hundred and five, but only five hundred and ninety eight students took the test, of which 264 were grade one and 334 were grade two students. The results were taken out of ten points.

Teachers are coded here from A-E, where each letter stands for a teacher and the number for a grade.

Table 18
Test Results

Teachers	No. of Students	Points out of Ten										
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1A	48	5	10	4	9	5	3	2	1	1	2	6
2A	52	3	4	7	2	4	4	5	6	5	-	12
1B	52	4	5	3	4	6	5	7	5	1	5	7
2B	56	1	2	3	4	6	5	4	7	12	1	11
1C	50	6	9	5	8	6	3	2	3	2	2	4
2C	84	12	17	10	4	5	7	10	3	5	3	8
1D	48	7	2	2	5	4	6	5	5	4	3	5
2D	56	11	6	7	3	5	3	4	5	4	3	5
1E	66	35	17	7	2	1	2	-	-	1	-	1
2E	86	14	20	10	4	5	5	9	2	5	2	10

4.3.1 Average Result of Testees

The number of testees in each section was not the same. So, in order to find out the average result, each student's result was taken out of 100% and the cumulative result was divided among the students in each section (Table 19).

Table 19

Cumulative and Average Results of the Testees

Teacher	No. of Students	Cumulative Result	Average Result
1A	48	1850	38.5
1B	52	1890	36.3
1C	50	2720	54.4
1D	48	2410	50.2
1E	66	690	10.4
2A	52	2920	56.1
2B	56	3320	59.2
2C	84	3570	42.5
2D	56	2890	51.6
2E	86	3230	37.5

As mentioned above, the purpose of the test was to see the effectiveness of the techniques teachers used in teaching vocabulary and to what extent students learned the meanings of words. And to accomplish this, the average result of each section was seen in rank order in relation to the major techniques teachers used.

4.3.2 Results in Relation to Techniques Used

The percentage of the major techniques was calculated by counting the vocabulary items taught and the techniques used by each teacher to teach the items during the observations.

Table 20

Results in Rank Order and Major Techniques Used by Teachers

Rank	Teacher	Average Result	Major Techniques Used	Percent of Major Techniques
1st	1C	54.4	Picture Cards	59.5
	2B	59.2	Pictures	46.7
2nd	1D	50.2	Real Objects	44.4
	2A	56.1	Blackboard drawings	69.2
3rd	1A	38.5	Translation	81.2
	2D	51.6	Pictures	72.7
4th	1B	36.3	Picture Cards	49.4
	2C	42.5	Pictures	100
5th	1E	10.4	Real Objects	65
	2E	37.5	Pictures	50

As seen from the table, the teachers' 40% and more of their techniques were visual ones, except one teacher, 1A, who used translation, (81%). In the first two ranks where the average result of students was 50% and above, the techniques mainly used were pictures, blackboard drawings, picture cards and real objects, in rank order. In the last three ranks too, except one, teachers used pictures, picture cards and real objects as major techniques.

When we see the 50% and more average results of both grades, in relation to the major techniques used, the use of pictures comes at the top of all the other techniques.

Table 21

50% and More Average Results of Both Grades

Average Result	Teacher	Major Technique Used	Percent of Major Technique
59.2	2B	Pictures	46.7
56.1	2A	Blackboard drawings	69.2
54.4	1C	Picture Cards	59.5
51.6	2D	Pictures	72.7
50.2	1D	Real Objects	44.4

These results seem to indicate that the visual techniques, specially, pictures, blackboard drawings, picture cards and real objects are the most effective techniques in teaching vocabulary to grades one and two students in Addis Ababa government primary schools.

4.4 Teachers' Response to Questionnaire and Observation Results

Teachers claimed that they used pictures (63.8%), blackboard drawings (59.6%), picture cards (51.5%), and real objects (45%) very frequently. The major techniques used during the observation were pictures (38%), real objects (21%), picture cards, blackboard drawings and translation, (14.2% each).

Table 22

Questionnaire Results in Relation to Observation Results

Vocabulary Teaching Techniques	Percentage of Very Frequent Users	Percentage of Use During Observation
Pictures	63.8%	38%
Blackboard drawings	59.6%	14.2%
Picture cards	51.5%	14.2%
Real objects	45%	21%

When compared, it can be seen that in both, the use of pictures has the highest percentage of users. Also, in both the questionnaire and the observation, the third most used technique was the use of picture cards. As can be seen from tables 12 and 21, the use of picture cards shares the same rank, third, with the use of blackboard drawings and translation. Whereas, the use of blackboard drawings stands

second to the use of pictures in the questionnaire. The second major technique used in the observation was real objects.

In the questionnaire, 30.5% and 33.3% of the teachers in grades one and two respectively, responded that they rarely use translation. However, as seen in tables 12 and 21, translation users are equal in percentage with the users of picture cards and blackboard drawings. These results seem to depict that there are more translation users than what teachers claimed to use in their response to the questionnaire.

Although the rank order of the techniques was not the same in both the questionnaire responses and the observation, it can be concluded that teachers used pictures, blackboard drawings, picture cards and real objects more often than any other techniques of teaching vocabulary

4.5 Questionnaire Results as seen in Relation to Test Results

The questionnaire responses, the observation and test results indicate that the use of pictures was the most employed and the most effective technique of teaching the meaning of vocabulary to grades one and two students. When the most frequently used techniques are seen in relation to the test results, in both, the use of pictures, blackboard drawings, picture cards and real objects come in the same rank order in their employment and effectiveness.

Table 23

Very Frequently Used Techniques and Test Results

Vocabulary Teaching Techniques	Percentage of Very Frequent Users	Average Test Results
Pictures	63.8%	59.2%
Blackboard drawings	59.6%	56.1%
Picture cards	51.5%	54.4%
Real objects	45%	50.2%

Thus, it can be said that teachers in government primary schools in Addis Ababa frequent the use of pictures, blackboard drawings, picture cards and real objects in teaching the meaning of vocabulary to grades one and two students. And these techniques were most effective as seen in the results students achieved. The success or failure in tests may also be attributed to some other factors. Teachers 1E and 2E who used real objects and pictures as their major techniques in teaching meaning during the observation, achieved results far below the average. Both being from the same school, I can say that there might be some other factors for their low achievement, which were not detected during the observation sessions.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

On the bases of the data collected from the questionnaire, the observation, the test and the interviews, we can draw the following conclusions:

- i) There are no vocabulary lessons in grades one and two, in the government primary schools in Addis Ababa. The teachers and the textbooks give more focus to the teaching of speaking, reading and writing exercises. Here, speaking means repeating words aloud; writing means practising writing the letters of the alphabet (for the contents of a lesson see Appendix 1).
- ii) The use of pictures is the most frequented and most effective technique in teaching the meaning of words in these grades (see Tables 7 and 20).
- iii) Teachers use translation more often in teaching the meaning of words. Students are also asked to translate English words into Amharic during oral examinations (see Tables 9 and 13).
- iv) A significant portion of the vocabulary items in the syllabus for grades one and two, 53.8%, can be taught using real objects which can be obtained from the classroom or the classroom environment (see Table 15).

Students also prefer real objects to pictures when learning meanings of words (see students' reaction to vocabulary learning). But teachers do not use this opportunity when teaching meanings of words. The use of real objects, as seen from the data collected, comes next to the use of pictures, picture cards and blackboard drawings in rank order.

- v) 'Mime and gesture' is the least employed visual technique in grades one and two (see Table 11). However, most of the verbs, numbers and other words in the syllabi, 67.5% of them or 18.7% of the total number of vocabulary items can be taught using this technique (see Table 16).
- vi) The use of wall pictures would be appropriate and effective in grades one and two, where most schools have large classes. As seen in the observation, (see Table 13), it has the least percentage of users (2%).
- vii) Synonymy, hyponymy and mime and gesture are never employed in teaching meanings of words in grades one and two (see Table 13).
- viii) Teachers do not use all the possible techniques which would interest children and help them understand meanings of words. Children need frequent changes of activity (Harmer, 1991: 7), but teachers mostly do not use different techniques and do not change activities frequently.

- ix) Most of the teachers are not aware of (may be not committed to) the different techniques of vocabulary teaching.
- x) In general, we can say that children in grades one and two, in the government primary schools of Addis Ababa are not exposed to a programme rich in meaningful real-life activities (Dunn, 1983: 3).

5.2 Recommendations

On the bases of the findings, the following recommendations are made:

- i) When teaching meanings of words, teachers use different techniques without taking into consideration the age of their students and the techniques which can be used with the different types of vocabulary in their lessons. In order to teach English in these grades efficiently, teachers should get training in the methodologies of teaching primary English.
- ii) To understand and to use words in communication, students need to learn basic vocabulary in grades one and two. To teach basic vocabulary, teachers should have vocabulary teaching lessons, where students can practise the new words by showing or telling meanings and activities, and practise to communicate with the words they learn.
- iii) The textbooks of grades one and two have pictures for every item to be practised in the exercises. The pictures are not coloured and may not be able to

attract the attention of children. To solve this, teachers in every primary school can have a sort of 'picture bank' where they can collect and use coloured pictures obtained from old magazines and newspapers.

- iv) In government primary schools, students are usually passive listeners. They do not participate in any teaching-learning activity. In order to learn, retain and use words, teachers should help their students to involve in meaningful activities in the English lessons.

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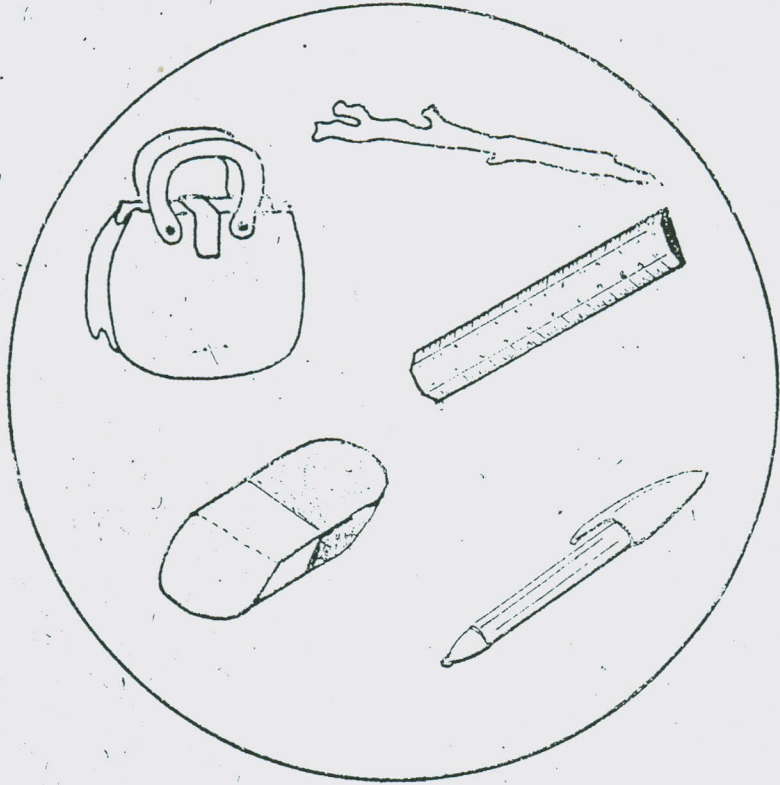
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LESSON 4

(Grade 1)

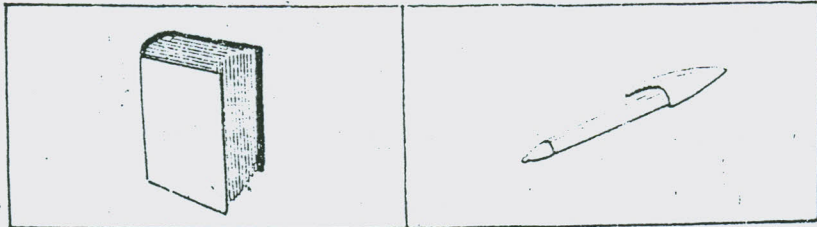
Speaking: He has a bag.



Reading

1. book

2. pen



Writing

nn

nih

hin

APPENDIX 2

A QUESTIONNAIRE ON VOCABULARY TEACHING TECHNIQUES

IN GRADES ONE AND TWO

School _____ Grade _____

When I teach vocabulary I use these techniques (✓).

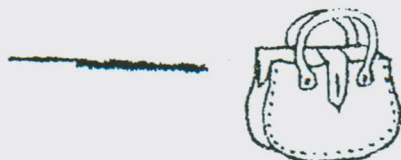
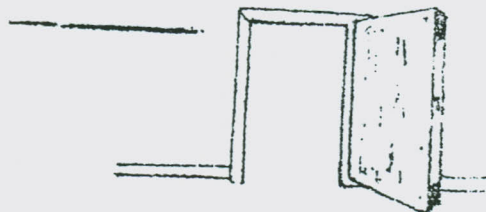
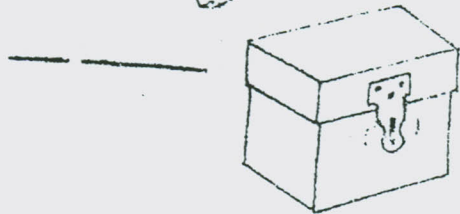
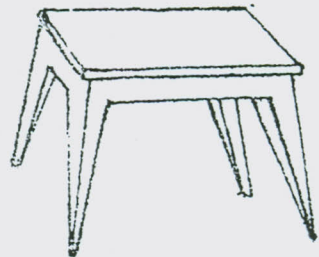
Vocabulary Teaching Techniques	Very Frequently	Frequently	Some-times	Rarely	Never
Real objects					
Pictures					
Picture cards					
Wall pictures					
Blackboard drawings					
Mime and Gesture (action)					
Synonymy					
Antonymy					
Hyponymy of examples of the types: (anima-cow, dog, ...)					
Translation					

APPENDIX 3

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEST FOR GRADE ONE

NAME: _____ SCHOOL: _____

ስዕሎችን ከቃላት ጋር በማዛመድ ፊደሉን ከስዕሉ ጎን ባለው መስመር ላይ ጻፍ(ፊ)።



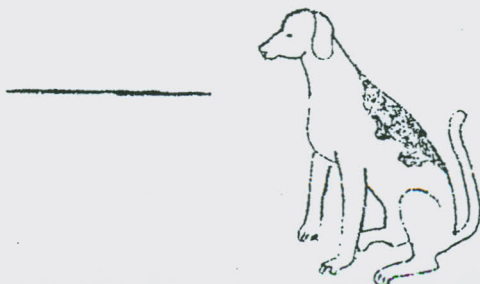
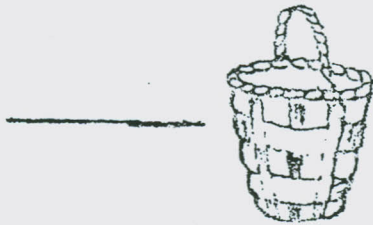
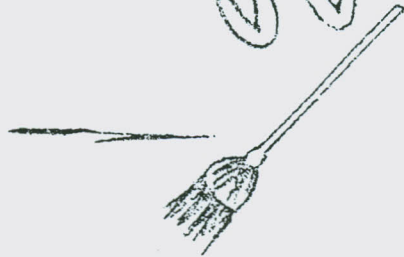
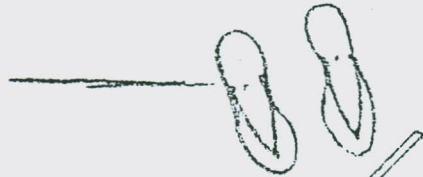
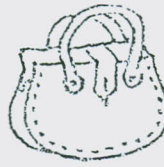
- A. BAG
- B. BALL
- C. SKIRT
- D. COW
- E. FLOWER
- F. SWEATER
- G. DOOR
- H. RULER
- I. BOX
- J. TABLE

APPENDIX 4

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEST FOR GRADE TWO

Match the pictures with the words below. Write the letters of the words on the given lines.

NAME: _____ SCHOOL _____



- A. DOG
- B. GLASS
- C. PLATE
- D. SHIRT
- E. HOUSE
- F. BASKET
- G. BROOM
- H. HEN
- I. SANDALS
- J. BAG

APPENDIX 5

Items taught during three observation sessions in grade one

Items Taught	Techniques Used 1A								
	RO	P	PC	WP	BD	MG	S	A	T
1. red									✓
2. yellow									✓
3. blue									✓
4. black									✓
5. bag	✓								
6. ruler									✓
7. cow		✓							
8. sweater									✓
9. skirt									✓
10. ball		✓							
11. stick									✓
12. sit									✓
13. stand									
14. touch									✓
15. grandfather									
16. grandmother									✓

Items Taught	Techniques Used								T 1B	
	RO	P	PC	WP	BD	MG	S	A	T	
1. shoe		✓								
2. car		✓								
3. pen	✓	✓	✓							
4. pencil	✓									
5. book	✓									
6. stone			✓							
7. ruler			✓							
8. rubber			✓							
9. stick			✓							
10. basket		✓								
11. cat		✓								
12. flower			✓							
13. sweater			✓							
14. skirt			✓							
15. dress			✓							
16. cow		✓								
17. box		✓								
18. cup		✓								

Items Taught	Techniques Used								T.10	
	RO	P	PC	WP	BD	MG	S	A	T	
1. dog		✓								
2. goat		✓								
3. cup			✓							
4. table			✓							
5. flower			✓							
6. arm			✓							
7. box					✓					
8. pencil			✓							
9. stone									✓	
10. door	✓									
11. window	✓									
T 1D										
1. pencil	✓									
2. pen	✓									
3. exercise book	✓									
4. chalk	✓									
5. book	✓									
6. ruler	✓									
7. table					✓					
8. boy					✓					
9. ball					✓					
10. girl					✓					
11. box					✓					
12. rat		✓								
13. chair		✓								
14. pot					✓					
15. bag					✓					
16. stick		✓								
17. grandfather	✓								✓	
18. grandmother	✓								✓	

Items Taught	Techniques Used T 1E								
	RO	P	PC	WC	BD	MG	S	A	T
1. table				✓					
2. cat		✓							
3. ball				✓					
4. box	✓								
5. pen	✓								
6. pencil	✓								
7. stand									✓
8. sit									✓
9. bag	✓								
10. window	✓								
12. door	✓								
13. chair			✓						
14. eyes	✓								
15. ears	✓								
16. nose	✓								
17. mouse	✓								
18. arms	✓								
19. leg	✓								
20. shoe		✓							

APPENDIX 6

Items Taught During three Observation Sessions in Grade 2

Items Taught	Techniques Used T 2A								
	RO	P	PC	WP	BD	MG	S	A	T
1. glass					✓				
2. house					✓				
3. plate					✓				
4. shoes					✓				
5. broom					✓				
6. basket					✓				
7. mat					✓				
8. shirt					✓				
9. hat					✓				
10. big	✓							✓	
12. small	✓							✓	
13. tall	✓							✓	
14. short	✓							✓	
T 2B									
1. mat	✓								✓
2. glass	✓								
3. blue	✓								
4. green	✓								
5. yellow	✓								
6. red	✓								
7. black	✓								
8. bag	✓								
9. sandals	✓								
10. shirt	✓								
11. house	✓								
12. boat	✓								
13. goat	✓								
14. sack	✓								
15. broom	✓								

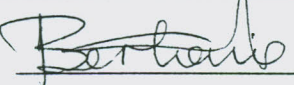
Items Taught	Techniques Used T 2C								
	RO	P	PC	WP	BD	MG	S	A	T
1. donkey		✓							
2. hen		✓							
3. monkey		✓							
4. fish		✓							
5. duck		✓							
6. snake		✓							
7. bag					✓				
8. car					✓				
9. red	✓								
10. black	✓								
11. yellow	✓								
12. blue	✓								
13. duster									✓
T 2D									
1. book					✓				
2. pen					✓				
3. bed	✓								
4. tin	✓								
5. brush	✓								
6. stool	✓								
7. sack	✓								
8. stick	✓								
9. hat	✓								
10. ruler	✓								
11. under									✓

Items Taught	Techniques Used								
	RO	P	PC	WP	BD	MG	S	A	T
1. table				✓					
2. mat			✓						
3. broom		✓							
4. bags			✓						
5. trees			✓						
6. dogs			✓						
7. hen		✓							
8. bird			✓						
9. box		✓							
10. sandals		✓							
11. car		✓							
12. basket		✓							

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my work and that all sources of material used for this thesis have been duly acknowledged.

Name Berhane Achame

Signature 

Place: Department of Foreign Languages and Literature

Addis Ababa University

Addis Ababa

Date of Submission June 2, 1998