

Increasing Vocabulary Power for Writing through Differentiating Confusing Word Pairs

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Context Information

Lesson Description	This lesson aims to enable students to differentiate the use of words and phrases for describing cause and effect. The target word pairs (e.g., affect/effect, impact/influence) may be confusing because of their similar spelling or functions. Verbs that represent “to cause” may have differing tones. Through hands-on corpus consultation, students are expected to identify the common language patterns of the target words and phrases, so that they can use these expressions accurately in their writing.
Target Students	Undergraduate Social Sciences Students (approx. 24-30 students)
Expected English Proficiency	DSE Level 3 or above; IELTS 6.5 or above
Teaching Context	Tutorial of English for General Academic Purposes, in a face-to-face setting with devices with Internet access
Duration	100 minutes
Corpora Used	For in-class activities: Sketch Engine for Language Learning (SkELL), Netspeak For the development of teaching and learning materials: SkELL, Netspeak, Corpus of Journal Articles 2014 (RCPCE PolyU)
Aims & Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To differentiate confusing vocabulary pairs through corpus-based language learning activities ● To build vocabulary for describing cause and effect ● To produce accurate texts describing cause and effect with the vocabulary and phrasal expressions learnt in the activities
Target Words/ Phrases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Affect vs Effect ● Impact vs Influence
Linguistic Knowledge Involved	Explicit linguistic knowledge: collocation, parts of speech, synonyms Implicit linguistic knowledge: semantic prosody

Lesson Plan

Time	Procedures	Interaction Mode	Activities
Stage 1: Testing Students' Knowledge of the Target Language Items (10 minutes)			
0:00 – 2:00	T explains the purposes of the lesson	Teacher explanation	-
2:00 – 7:00	Ss pair up and fill out a cloze passage activity involving the use of the target words and phrases to be taught in this lesson	Students working in pairs	Activity 1
7:00 – 10:00	T goes over the answer to the activity with the Ss	Teacher-student discussion	
Stage 2: Hands-on Corpus Consultation to Identify Language Patterns (35 minutes)			
10:00 – 15:00	Explain the rules of the game "Grammar Battle"	Teacher explanation	-
15:00 – 20:00	T asks the Ss pairs to access SkELL with their devices, and type "affect" in the query bar; Choose <i>Examples</i> to show results; Explain the <i>Examples</i> function in SkELL	Teacher demonstration, followed by students' exploration	Corpus activity: SkELL
20:00 – 25:00	Ss study the search results of "affect" in the <i>Examples</i> page and identify <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Word variations of "affect" and 2. The collocating words following "affect" 	Students working in pairs	Activity 2.1
25:00 – 30:00	Repeat Activity 2.1 with "effect", but to identify the collocating words preceding "effect" this time	Students working in pairs	Activity 2.2
30:00 – 32:00	Ss are asked to infer the parts of speech of "effect" and "affect".	Students working in pairs	Activity 2.3
32:00 – 35:00	Explain the <i>Word Sketch</i> function in SkELL	Teacher explanation	-
35:00 – 40:00	Ss are asked to check results from <i>Examples</i> and <i>Word Sketches</i> to identify common collocations of "affect" (v) and "effect" (n): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What words are used to modify "affect" (<i>look for "modifiers of 'affect'?"</i>)? 2. What words are used to modify "effect" (<i>look for "modifiers of 'effect'?"</i>)? 	Students working in pairs	Activity 2.4

40:00 – 45:00	Group with the lowest mark in the Grammar Battle is required to finish the output exercise as punishment.	Students working in pairs	Activity 2.5
Stage 3: Inductive Discovery (25 minutes)			
45:00 – 47:00	T discusses with Ss: What is the tone commonly associated with “affect” and “effect”?	Teacher-guided pair work	Activity 2.6
47:00 – 50:00	Explain the <i>Similar Words</i> function in SkELL	Teacher explanation	-
50:00 – 55:00	T discusses with Ss: Check <i>Similar Words</i> of “affect” as a verb. Find the word that is associated with a similar tone as “affect”, and one associated with a different tone.	Teacher-guided pair work	Activity 2.7
55:00 – 60:00	With SkELL, Ss investigate another pair of potentially confusing words “impact” and “influence”. 1. Both words as nouns: what are the common modifiers? 2. Both words as verbs: what are the common subjects?	Teacher-guided pair work	Activity 2.8
60:00 – 65:00	T asks the Ss pairs to access Netspeak with their devices; Explain the <i>find the best option</i> function in Netspeak	Teacher explanation	Corpus activity: Netspeak
65:00 – 70:00	Use the <i>find the best option</i> function of Netspeak to find out under what circumstances “impact” and “influence” are used more frequently, for example: 1. Negatively/adversely/severely/seriously 2. Heavily/significantly/profoundly/deeply	Teacher-guided pair work	Activity 3.1
	T discusses with the Ss their observations of the words “impact” and “influence” in terms of their associated tones	Teacher-guided pair work	Activity 3.2
Stage 4: Output Exercises (30 minutes)			
70:00 – 85:00	T demonstrates a paraphrasing exercise, and shows how to use SkELL to find the right collocations for the target words, and use Netspeak to determine which expressions are more commonly used.	Teacher demonstration	Activity 4
	Ss are asked to engage in a paraphrasing exercise with SkELL and Netspeak.	Students working in pairs	
85:00 – 95:00	T checks the answers with the Ss	Teacher-guided discussion	
95:00 – 100:00	T summarises major findings derived in this lesson:	Teacher summary	

	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Although some word pairs are spelt similarly, their parts of speech may be different, as we have discovered from the corpus data;2. Although many words mean similarly to “cause” (both as a noun and a verb), they may be slightly nuanced in terms of tone, such as the underlying attitudinal reading of the word based on its collocations.		
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