

HOW TO TEACH VOCABULARY BASED UPON THE TEXTBOOK

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CÁCH GIẢNG DẠY TỪ VỰNG THEO GIÁO TRÌNH HOW TO TEACH VOCABULARY BASED UPON THE TEXTBOOK

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Abstract

Expanding vocabulary leads to an improvement in overall Vietnamese language skills. Even if the student resorts to lists and rote memorization, learning vocabulary is still the best way to build all the major language skills. That's because building vocabulary in any way boosts Vietnamese language skills such as communication, visualization, memory recall and practical usage, among others. Clearly, a wider vocabulary means that students have more words at their disposal.

Based on the requirement of the Proficiency Testing of Vietnamese Language issued by the Ministry of Education and Training in Vietnam, our focus is on delivering about 600 basic words throughout Level A1 (of six levels), by dividing them into 10 daily conversational topics in 10 lessons (five topics in Elementary Vietnamese I and five topics in Elementary Vietnamese II) targeting the four language skills, from the most basic and simplest words and grammar onwards. At the beginning, students approach new vocabulary via sample conversations, and then they practice these words with sample sentences, learning how to use them in different contexts. All the new words are memorized by practicing in classes for listening, reading, and writing skills.

This paper focuses on to how to teach vocabulary in the Vietnamese language at an elementary level (Level A1) for first year students to build other language skills. The books we use are Elementary Vietnamese I– Vietnamese Major, Asian Languages Department, Kanda University of International Studies (Tran Trong Giang- Ed).

I. Introduction

Teaching foreign language vocabulary is one of the most interesting tasks for both teacher and student. As we know, each of us has our own way of learning a new language, based on our culture, our educational background, and most importantly, we believe, our personalities.

According to research into second language acquisition, there are eight different kinds of language learner, those types being “visual, auditory, tactile, kinesthetic, field-independent, field-dependent, reflective and impulsive”¹. The teacher must recognize that every student learns in a different way. A successful lesson requires attention to structure, target language, and activities to absorb and apply the information, just to name a few important needs. In order to make it simpler we separate the eight groups of learners into four categories: “visual learners (learn best by seeing), auditory learners (learn best by listening), reading and writing learners (prefer to take in information displayed as words and text), and kinesthetic (or tactile) learners (learn best by touching and doing)”². This way, the textbook we compose should fit all students. The teacher, too, must consider the preferred learning styles of the students.

The textbook *Elementary Vietnamese I – Vietnamese Major*, Asian Languages Department, Kanda University of International Studies (Tran Trong Giang- Ed) has five lessons, each describing daily activities with vocabulary complying with the requirements of proficiency testing of Vietnamese language issued by The Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam. The textbook has three parts, which are the lessons, vocabulary, and listening scripts. All the lessons are constructed with the formulas 1) Speaking Practice: Presenting new words with visual stimuli (pictures); 2) Conversation: Attaching context to vocabulary by building conversations in similar environments; 3) Vocabulary: Building confidence with word clusters

¹ Reid, J. M. (1995). *Learning styles in the ESL/EFL classroom*. Florence, KY: Heinle & Heinle Publishers.

² Fleming and Mills (1992), *The VARK Modalities*, <<https://vark-learn.com/introduction-to-vark/the-vark-modalities>>

by using them in sentences and short essays; 4) Writing Practice: Keeping new words practical by using them in daily conversations, and giving a clearer picture of how to construct the sentences; 5) Listening Practice: not only helping students to remember new vocabulary but also aiding their pronunciation.

In this paper, we focus on how to teach vocabulary based on the lessons in Textbook I (Level A1). The new words and grammar points are introduced in context as conversations. Then in the next parts, the students practice speaking, reading, writing and listening. As we know, “There are few auditory learners among Japanese language students. They tend to be much stronger visual learners, requiring information to be presented on the board, in printable sheet, or via reality”³, and the textbook is what students need. The vocabulary and writing practice are here to help students understand more clearly both the meanings and how to use the language in particular contexts. The listening practice part is important for the students at the early levels, not only for word usage but also for pronunciation.

II. Proficiency Testing of Vietnamese Language Frame issued by The Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam (Number: 17/2015/TT-BGDĐT issued on September 1st 2015)⁴

2.1. The purpose:

The Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam has issued the Proficiency Testing of Vietnamese Language with the following aims:

- As a foundation to unify assessment of Vietnamese language proficiency for foreigners; to build curricula, syllabi; to compose or select textbooks; to construct evaluation

³ Ken Hyland, The Learning Styles of Japanese Students, <<https://jalt-publications.org/sites/default/files/pdf-article/jj-16.1-art4.pdf>>

⁴ <https://thukyluat.vn/vb/thong-tu-17-2015-tt-bgdtdt-khung-nang-luc-tieng-viet-cua-nguoi-nuoc-ngoai-4696e.html>

criteria at each level;

- As a foundation for teachers and lecturers to select and deploy content, methods of teaching, testing and evaluation in order to support learners to meet the requirements of the training program.
- Help learners understand the content and requirements for each level of Vietnamese language proficiency and assess their own competence.
- Create favorable conditions for cooperation, exchange of education, recognition of diplomas and certificates with countries using the Common European Framework of Reference (hereinafter referred to as Common European Framework of Reference, or CEFR)

2.2. General description

	Level	General Description
Elementary	A1	Can understand and use familiar linguistic materials; knows how to use basic words to meet specific communication needs: introducing self and others; presenting information about themselves such as where to live, relatives/friends, etc. Able to communicate easily if the listener speaks slowly, clearly, and is willing to cooperate to help.
	A2	Understands frequently used sentences and language structures related to basic communication needs, like information about family, self, shopping, asking directions, jobs. Can exchange information on simple, familiar daily topics, short self-introduction, their surroundings and issues of essential needs.

Inter-	B1	Understands the main ideas of a standard, clear paragraph or speech on familiar topics in work, school, and entertainment. Able to handle most situations where the Vietnamese language is used; can write simple texts related to familiar or personal topics of interest; can describe experiences, events, and desires, and briefly explain reasons, ideas and plans.
	B2	Understands the gist of a fairly complex text on a variety of topics, including conversations with content in student’s area of expertise. Able to communicate smoothly and naturally with Vietnamese people; can write clear, detailed texts on many different topics and point out views on an issue, including advantages and disadvantages of different options.
Advanced	C1	Recognizes and understands the implications of long, broad textual content. Able to express ideas fluently and instantly, without difficulty finding wording; uses language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes; can write clear, coherent, detailed text on complex topics, demonstrating the ability to organize text, and making good use of punctuation and linking words in the text.
	C2	Easily understands most spoken and written texts. Able to summarize sources of spoken or written information, rearranging and restating logically; expresses ideas very smoothly and accurately, distinguishing subtle differences in meaning in complex situations.

III. Structure of lessons in the textbook

The best way to teach vocabulary is to contextualize it. In this textbook, we group words together using the context of daily conversation. We can show how the vocabulary works together in sentences and paragraphs. With a complete story that utilizes all of it, students can

absorb vocabulary more easily.

Textbook I introduces about 600 words. All the vocabulary is divided into five lessons with five different topics, with Lesson 6 for review, as shown⁵:

Lesson 1	Xin lỗi, bạn tên là gì?	すみません、お名前は何ですか。
Lesson 2	Cô là người Nhật, phải không?	あなたは日本人ですね。
Lesson 3	Gia đình bạn có mấy người?	あなたの家族は何人いますか。
Lesson 4	Bây giờ là mấy giờ?	いま何時ですか。
Lesson 5	Tôi ít khi uống trà vào buổi tối.	夜はほとんどお茶を飲みません。
Lesson 6	Bao giờ cô ấy đến gặp anh được?	彼女はいつあなたに会えますか。

Every lesson comprises five parts.

3.1. Conversation: All the new vocabulary is presented in context to give the student a better vision of the meaning and grammar, and how to use the words in a particular situation. These words and grammar points are taught in the context of talking according to topics.

3.2. Speaking practice:

This part is not only to review the meanings and practice the usage of the vocabulary, but also to practice the pronunciation.

3.3. Practicing using new vocabulary

The more words our Vietnamese language students know, the better they can apply their language in a practical way. Each new vocabulary word is a new tool to boost your students' abilities to speak, write and understand all the Vietnamese they encounter. Connecting words with visuals is the main theme in the Speaking Practice part, and practical use, or

⁵ Tran Trong Giang-Ed (2018), The Vietnamese Language Textbook I, Vietnamese Language Major, Asian Languages Department, Kanda University of International Studies.

contextualization, is what we teach our students.

3.4. Listening practice

As we know, listening comprehension is as important as speaking skills. Practicing listening is necessary to help students understand native Vietnamese speakers, not only for the purpose of comprehension, but also so that they can respond and interact with others appropriately. We may say that listening comprehension is a key to unlock conversations and communication.

3.5. Writing practice

People often say that we learn to write best by reading. Students can expand their vocabulary and master their Vietnamese spelling by practicing writing, and then they will be able to express themselves clearly while understanding model texts and their instructions.

With these aims in mind, writing is taught in the first stage of learning Vietnamese as below:

Arrange words into completed sentences; based on answers, write questions; answer questions on designated topics; matching two sentences from two groups; re-write sentences with new grammar structures; complete sentences by adding missing words.

IV. Teaching vocabulary based on the textbook - Lecture illustration

Clearly we must be good at listening comprehension if we want to speak well. And we must be good at reading comprehension if we want to write well. When we gain the skill of speaking, it is not difficult to conquer reading. Once we master writing skills, listening comprehension is not so difficult anymore. In other words, the four language skills complement each other. When we teach speaking skills, it is not enough to correct the student's pronunciation and/or intonation, we need to explain the grammar and show how to make a correct sentence.

In this paper, in order to illustrate this point, we use the material in Lesson 3 in Textbook I,

Vietnamese Language Major, Asian Languages Department, Kanda University of International Studies (Ed. Tran Trong Giang). Each lesson in the textbook is taught over 10 school hours.

We choose Lesson 3 because this is in the middle of the books, so we can see clearly how to incorporate what we have taught earlier, into the lesson we are teaching.

Teaching vocabulary with context means, of course, that we need to decide the context first. The chosen topic needs to put everything else in the right place. For this sample illustration, we used “talking about family” as the subject.

Lesson 3 Gia đình bạn có mấy người? あなたの家族は何人いますか。

In this lesson, the student learns how to talk about the occupation, age and residence of their family’s members, and how to say the numbers from 20 to 100.

As regards grammar, this lesson instructs the student in:

How to use the adverbs of time: “đã”, “đang”, “sẽ”; the interrogative words: “đâu”, “mấy”, “bao nhiêu”, “hả”; the final particle “đấy”; the modal verb “có”; the possessive word “của”; the adverb of grade “quá”

4.1. Teaching vocabulary with speaking skill

Since we definitely want to learn to speak a language well, the first thing we need is enough vocabulary to use. Not only do we need to know the meanings of words, but we also need to know how to use them in sentences. In Vietnamese, it is hard to understand all the points without context, so conversations with a clear topic help students focus on what we want to talk about.

4.1.1. Teaching conversation comprehension

The conversation is the most important part of the lesson. All the new vocabulary and grammar points are introduced in the conversations. Thus, when we teach the conversation, besides giving a clear idea of the meanings, intonations and rhythms when we are speaking, the sentence structures and grammar need to be clarified. Correct pronunciation modeling and answering any questions on the spot allow your students to make real-time self-corrections.

- In class:

Firstly, Teacher reads the conversation, and asks students to write down any words or phrases they do not understand. This step guides students on pronunciation and sentence intonation.

Secondly, Teacher presents the vocabulary in the context of the conversation, and then presents the new words' definitions and transcriptions, explains any new grammar points and parts of speech, and how to use them in the sentences. Teacher should allow some discussion and answer questions as needed before moving on. We can develop vocabulary by asking students to make similar conversations about their family, someone they know, or anything else they want to say.

Lastly, Teacher can ask the students some questions about the conversation to make sure they understand.

- Outside class: Teacher can ask students to make similar conversations with their classmate (pair-work); or write down what they understand about the conversation.

Once Teacher has planted the new words into the students' minds with context, it is time for contextual action. Break up students into pairs or groups, and then have them develop their own family scripts using the freshly presented vocabulary. They can work together in their peer groups and simply modify the transcriptions from the model conversation, or they could create

totally new scripts of their own.

Conversation 1 -In this conversation, students will:

- Review how to greet, and say goodbye; learn how to use adverb of grade “quá”, and distinguish “quá”; “rất”; “lắm”; learn how to use the final particle “đấy”, distinguish “đang” and final particle “đấy”, and review how to use “đã”, “đang” and “sẽ” to indicate tenses; learn how to use “thôi” – when wanting to stop doing one thing in order to do another, at in the beginning of sentence; compare to “thôi”, indicating this, not that, at the end of the sentences; review how to use possessive word “của”- of, and understand difference between “nhà tôi” : my house and “nhà của tôi”: the house of mine, or my property.

- **Useful phrases:** Lâu quá không gặp: Long time no see; and Hẹn gặp lại : See (you) again

Conversation 2 -In this conversation, students will:

- Review personal pronouns and family members; learn how to talk about family members; learn how to make the question “How many”; know when to use “mấy” – how many (expecting less than 10 in answer) and “bao nhiêu” - how many (expecting more than 10 in answer); distinguish between “mấy / bao nhiêu + object”: How many, and “object + mấy / bao nhiêu”: which; learn how to make questions asking about occupation “làm nghề gì?”; know when to use “đâu” – where, or “ở đâu” - where learn the question tag “hả”, and understand the difference between “hả” – right? / aren't you...? and “phải không” – right? / aren't you...

Conversation 3 - In this conversation, students will:

- Learn how to make questions and answers with “được” - can; distinguish between “được + verb”: to have a chance to do when the verb is a positive thing , and “verb + được” or “được” at the end of sentence, to indicate ability (can verb); learn how to use “mời” as “please” or to

invite; learn the difference between “mời”: please (as invitation), and “làm ơn”: please (asking for help) and “xin”: please (formal and asking for help in emergency); learn about question tag “à?”: used to look for confirmation when you are not sure or do not believe. Compare to “phải không?” and “hả?”; learn preposition “đề”: for (doing something), compare to “cho”: for (someone), and “trong”: for (period of time); learn difference between adverbs of manner like “giỏi / tốt / hay”;

- **Useful phrases:** Cám ơn (anh): Thank you (Mr) ; Không có chi: You’re welcome; Rất vui được gặp...: Nice to meet...

4.1.2. Teaching speaking

At this level, students need increase their vocabulary in any way they can, be it understanding meaning, pronouncing it and/or using it in sentences. In this section, working in groups or pairs, students feel more comfortable and confident talking with their classmate. There are four points that students need focus on, as follows.

1. Replace words

* **How to teach:** Teacher reads all vocabulary and gives definition and transcriptions. Students listen and repeat what they hear. When someone pronounces a word wrongly, teacher can stop and correct their pronunciation; ask students to take turns reading aloud model sentences, replacing words one by one; teacher can ask students the model question to build up their familiarity with the language of questions and answers.

* **Aims:** Review personal pronouns and making questions with: how many (people), saying someone’s nationality, forming yes-no questions “...có...không?” in order to confirm if listener/s has/have something, and Wh-questions such as what (do what); where (asking direction or destination); model sentences “(Someone) comes to (somewhere) for (doing

something”); say the exclamation with adjective of grade “quá”; and demonstratives “this / that”; students learn how to form sentences in Vietnamese, using new vocabulary and creating scripts of their own from model sentences; from the model sentences, students can build up their vocabulary bank. In this lesson, they learn nouns indicating time (yesterday, today, tomorrow); some useful verbs describing daily activities; and common nouns for things around us.

2. Look at pictures and information - Making questions and answers

* **How to teach:** Teacher reads the title of this part; makes sure students understand what they should do*; then teacher reads all vocabulary and gives definitions and transcriptions**. Students listen and repeat what they hear. When hearing someone pronounces wrongly, teacher can stop and correct their pronunciation; teacher role-plays Q&A with one student for the first picture and its information. When all students know how to play this game, teacher asks them do it in pairs.

* **Aims:**-Make sure students know how to ask or answer about themselves; review 3rd person personal pronoun; practice questions such as: Where is he/she from? / What does he/she do? Where does she/he work? / What languages can he/she speak? ; this step helps students to draw a language map in their mind with a particular picture so that they will remember more easily and for longer.

3. Look at picture and information- Making questions and answers

* **How to teach:** Teacher does as * and ** in part 2 above; teacher picks any information and asks a question about it for one student first, and then has that student do the same with anyone they want to ask. Take turns asking and answering until the picture of the family is complete. This is not only good practice but also lowers embarrassment and barriers between students.

* **Aims:** Students will know how to ask questions to get information about someone's family, and will also be able to introduce their own family members; review 3rd person plural personal pronoun; practice questions and answers such as: How many brothers and sisters do (you) have / Where do (you) live? / How old are (you)? / What do (you) do? / Where do (you) work?

4. Based on the model essay, introduce your family

* **How to teach:** Teacher underlines replaceable words in the text, and then reads it slowly, clearly and loudly, focusing on sentence rhythms and intonation, making sure the students understand what they should do; teacher gives an example by introducing the family first, and then using the phrase "Còn bạn?"- And you? to ask one student. Everyone takes turn to answer. This is a good chance for all students to speak in class.

* **Aims:** Students know how to make a short introduction like residency, language abilities about them.

4.2. Teaching reading comprehension

At this level, the reading skill requirement is for students to understand very short and simple texts about topics already studied, here being themselves and their family, and be able to recognize proper names, personal pronouns, family vocabulary, and occupations. There are three points students need to focus on, as below:

1. Fill in the blanks with the appropriate word

* **How to teach:**-Ask students to read all given words; give the definitions and transcriptions of these words; divide the given words into categories of parts of speech (noun, verb, adjective, adverb); teacher reads the text, has students analyze the sentences to find what kind of words are missing, and compare to words in the categories above; decide which word is correct for each blank.

* **Aims:** Know the position of parts of speech in a sentence because in Vietnamese, a word standing in a different place can change the meaning; can recognize words learned to find information; when they can understand, students can speak well about their family.

2. Add more words of the same type as the underlined word

* **How to teach:** Ask students to read sentences one by one; identify the category of underlined word and ask students to compare to their vocabulary bank and think of words of a similar kind and with a similar meaning (matching the verb).

* **Aims:** Practice vocabulary of work-places, names of countries, occupations, and descriptive adjectives.

3. Odd words out (not belongs to the group)

* **How to teach:** Ask students to read given words and ask them what part of speech and what category they are. For example, all words in Number 1 are nouns, and most of them are occupations, but two (công ty, đại học) describe work-places - they are the two odd words out.

* **Aims:** Students can correctly get information from what they read. Thus they will be able to use this vocabulary smoothly in speaking, writing or listening.

4.3. Teaching writing comprehension

At this level, teaching writing skills focuses on spelling accuracy and how to form basic sentence (subject + verb + object), while also noting significant differences of sentence structure between the Vietnamese and Japanese languages, such as the position of words in sentences (many words have different meanings in different positions).

For the common language criteria of this lesson, writing skills involve basic knowledge of how to express personal information, writing numbers from 20 to 100, and writing phrases and

simple sentences about occupations, work-places and residences of oneself or fictional people.

There are five points students need to focus on, as follows:

1. Arrange given words into sentences

* **How to teach:** Ask students take turns to read the words, checking their pronunciation; Give definitions and transcriptions of new vocabulary; Identify the kinds of words and kinds of sentences (interrogative, affirmative or negative sentence); Remind students of the structures of that kind of sentence; and ask students one by one to read out their sentences.

* **Aims:** Practice spelling accuracy, and how to make sentence based on the given information.

2. Choose sentences from Group B to fill in the blanks in Group A

* **How to teach:** Ask students take turns to read sentences in each group, checking their pronunciation; Give definitions and transcriptions of new vocabulary; make sure they understand the meaning of each sentence; have students choose which sentences from Group B have suitable subjects and meaning first, and then have them decide which sentence goes into which blank in Group A; Reinforce language by asking students in pairs to read the completed text aloud.

* **Aims:** Build up the basic knowledge to write simple sentences with various kinds of described abilities, places of work, places to live, and so on; Improve spelling accuracy.

3. Transform the sentences into questions

* **How to teach:** Ask students to take turns reading the sentences in each group, checking their pronunciation; Give definitions and transcriptions of new vocabulary; underline the word needed to make the question (whether the question is about the subject, verb or object); Ask students read aloud their questions.

* **Aims:** Help students understand clearly the sentence functions, and appropriate kinds of words for each; improve spelling accuracy and sentence rhythm.

4. Based on the answers, make the questions

* **How to teach:** Ask students to take turns to read the sentences in each group, checking their pronunciation; Give definitions and transcriptions of new vocabulary; Guide students to identify the kind of question (yes-no or wh-question) based on the answer; Ask students to read aloud their questions.

* **Aims:** Improve their ability in distinguishing yes-no and wh-questions; Improve spelling accuracy and sentence rhythm.

5. Complete the sentences

* **How to teach:** Ask students to take turns reading the sentences in each group, checking their pronunciation; Give definitions and transcriptions of new vocabulary; Review the sentence structure, and then identify which words (subject, verb or object) are missing. This is a time for students to use their accumulated vocabulary.

* **Aims:** Consolidate students' vocabulary by using it in sentences and in context. In this way, they can write about themselves, their family, and their friends.

4.4. Teaching listening comprehension

At this level, teaching listening skills focuses on tracking words to find information with very simple sentences spoken very slowly and clearly about a designated topic (This topic is about family and friends).

In this lesson, the listening section comprises two parts, the first is short conversations and the second is a short text.

1. Listen to the conversations and choose the correct answer

* **How to teach:** Read and give definitions and transcriptions of key vocabulary in the conversations, and also in the answers; ask them to look at the picture and guess the answer; First time listening, pause for five seconds after every sentence. After each conversation, ask students which words they can hear but cannot recognize. Teacher can repeat these words slowly and clearly, giving some tips for them to remember; The second time, let students listen to the whole conversation, and try to choose the answer; Read a third time for students to check their answer.

* **Aims:** Develop the skill of tracking words to find information from a short conversation, and also to practice their pronunciation.

2. Listen to the introduction and choose the correct answer

* **How to teach:** Read and give definitions and transcriptions of key vocabulary in the conversations, and also in the answers; First time listening, pause for five seconds after every sentence. After reading the text aloud, ask students which words they can hear but cannot recognize. Teacher can repeat these words slowly and clearly, giving some tips for them to remember; the second time, pause for five seconds after every two or three sentences to give them more time to process the information. After finishing the text, ask them to choose the answers; read a third time for students to confirm their answer.

* **Aims:** Practice the ability of tracking words to find the information from a short text, and also practice their pronunciation.

V. Conclusion

Any lesson can become a vocabulary lesson. Let's say we are ready to get away from lists of isolated vocabulary. Let's say we really want to teach students to speak, understand, read and write Vietnamese while teaching vocabulary. We will start using the practical strategies outlined above and thus, whenever we introduce a new word in a practical way with great, multidimensional activities, our students are able to improve their pronunciation and knowledge of grammatically-correct word usage as well.

In the Vietnamese language, it is hard to understand vocabulary out of context, therefore when we have decided on the list of necessary vocabulary, we need to place it all into a context which is familiar to the students. This will help our students remember and understand it more easily. In addition, teaching vocabulary is not teaching any particular language skill, but it teaches *all* skills. While the conversations are the first step to introduce new words, grammar, or word usage, teaching the other skills gives our students a practical way to use these words in speaking, reading and writing, and lets them recognize them when listening to other people.

And finally, a good textbook and curriculum must satisfy all kinds of students, whether they are visual learners, audio learners, reading and writing learners or kinesthetic learners. We believe that the teaching of vocabulary needs to present words with visual stimuli, attach context to vocabulary, and build confidence with word clusters, by basically mapping out the relationships between the words which students need to identify. We should supply as many descriptive words as possible, including synonyms and antonyms (especially for verbs and adjectives), and keep the new words practical. The usage of new vocabulary in such a practical manner will allow students to think fast by answering questions or coming up with questions to ask. Furthermore, students also want to build their new word banks and want to try to use them. Having students practice their new vocabulary out loud will also develop pronunciation

of their new words, and make it easier for the teacher make on-the-spot pronunciation fixes.

This paper is limited to teaching vocabulary at elementary level. At this level, students need to learn not only grammatically-correct word usage, but also pronunciation and how to create a sentence, which are very different from those of the Japanese language. It takes much time to practice new vocabulary over and over. The lectures must be designed with word usage in mind throughout all the skills. Keeping new words practical will let students know exactly how to use them when they need them the most.

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