

You Don't Know the Language If You Don't Know the Words: Learning Vocabulary in an Oral, Communicative Classroom

One of the most interesting aspects of a pedagogy that uses more oral, communicative methods to teach Latin is its approach to vocabulary. In an oral, communicative classroom, vocabulary is not left to the students to memorize at home nor does the immediate nature of language use in such a classroom allow for reliance on dictionaries. Instead, the teacher puts much greater emphasis on pre-teaching all the vocabulary that the students will need to understand the Latin used in class and ensuring that the students have mastery over it before any other activities occur. To this end, an oral, communicative methodology tends to expose students to fewer words, more gradually, but with far greater repetitions. A number of techniques for teaching vocabulary in an oral, communicative classroom will be discussed in this talk including the use of powerpoint slides, oral substitution and transformation drills, personalized questions and answers, circling, microloquues, and movietalk. Finally, I will discuss the strengths of a more oral and communicative classroom in light of the most recent research about the learning of vocabulary and second language acquisition.