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Vocabulary Masks

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Cover Page Footnote

I would like to thank my colleagues and students at UCF, SSC, ERAU, and Daytona State College for all the encouragement and support to continue teaching ESL and ESOL courses during COVID.

As language instructors, we should teach vocabulary in every lesson. How can we combine L2 vocabulary with active teaching and learning techniques? In the past, language instructors taught EL to write long word lists into their notebooks. Do ELs remember these new words? Is there a better way to teach vocabulary for ELs to practice using them in authentic contexts? Wearing masks has become a daily activity around the world. ELs can express and share their raw emotions by writing and wearing inspirational words on their masks. Vocabulary masks can ignite salient discussions and reconnect ELs with their emotional journeys in real-life situations. Combining words with masks is a healing and learning process that includes L2 vocabulary acquisition.

Here is an example of a lesson plan used during the COVID-19 pandemic with English language learners.

Lesson Plan – Creating Vocabulary Masks

Learning Objective: Wearing masks has become the new norm during COVID-19. ELs will use a variety of words and phrases to describe how they felt during COVID-19, being quarantined for a long time, and returning to school. They will write these words, phrases, and raw emotions on disposable face masks using sharpie markers and acrylic paint. Some students have had COVID, or their family members and friends had COVID. They can share their positive and negative experiences with other students during pair and group work. ELs have learned many new words related to health, science, education, economics, and politics during COVID-19. Schools have returned to face-to-face and hybrid instruction. Other schools continue to provide synchronous and asynchronous instruction online. This lesson can teach ELs new vocabulary and collocations with real-life situations. This lesson can reconnect ELs with each other and ease the learning process of acquiring a new language.

Class Time: 60 minutes

Materials: 20 or more disposable masks in different colors; 10 colored sharpie markers and water-based paint with different colors

5 minutes: Warmup Activity - Ask students how they felt during COVID-19. Use one positive or negative word. It can be an adjective, noun, or verb. Students can share their thoughts in pairs or groups.

10 minutes: Ask students to write positive and/or negative feelings using different words - adjectives, adverbs, nouns, or verbs during COVID on their masks. They should write one or two words in large letters. Some students can write words and phrases in English and in their native languages. They can draw pictures but make sure it doesn't look too busy on the masks.

An example of these masks can be found in Appendix B.

10 minutes: After they create their vocabulary masks, they will share their words or phrases with partners in small groups.

30 minutes: Each group will share their vocabulary masks with the entire class. The instructor will facilitate questions, answers, and class discussions.

5 minutes: Follow up activity – homework assignment: The instructor can ask students to write sentences or paragraphs and share stories and anecdotes on discussion boards about the words or phrases that they wrote on their vocabulary masks. They can also draw pictures on posters to display during oral presentations.

Assessments: Instructors can give vocabulary assessment games and quizzes from the list of words that the students have shared. **A list of words can be found in Appendix A.**

Reflection Questions/Discussions for Educators

- Which kind of teaching (i.e., in-person or remote) was better or worse? Why?
- Which method was more challenging for you and your students?

New vocabulary – Zoom, Synchronous *versus* Asynchronous, Online, Remote Learning

On March 18, 2020, My Omani students were quarantined in hotels for 2 weeks when they returned to Oman during the COVID-19 global pandemic. I used virtual backgrounds to teach students about world culture. This is a photo that I took on a mountain glacier in Iceland. I taught my students how to use virtual backgrounds on Zoom, and we would guess their locations:





Additionally, other types of masks besides PPE can be used. In this example, students used Halloween masks as well as costumes and other props to learn new vocabulary.



Halloween masks CEP Zoom class 10-29-2020

Reflection Questions/Discussions for Instructors

- What educational words did you learn during COVID-19?
- How did you teach these words to your students?
- What activities can you do with these words in class?
- What emotions did you have during the pandemic? Write words or phrases on your masks and share your words and phrases with your partner. Why did you write these words, phrases, or raw emotions?
- How will you use these words to help you or heal other people?
- Will you share them with your students, family, and friends?
- How can you reconnect students to the vocabulary masks?
- Will you wear your vocabulary masks in public?
- Do your words express positive or negative emotions?
- What kind of conversations and discussions will occur?
- What kind of reactions will you get if you wear these masks in public?
- What active lessons and assessments will you use to continue teaching vocabulary masks?

Summary

Masks are still being worn in schools and elsewhere around the world. COVID will continue to be part of the new norm in the future. Globally, instructors and students are learning how to adapt and survive as new variants of the coronavirus have appeared. Masks have become part of a fashion statement as stores are advertising their businesses with logos and teenagers are wearing colorfully decorated masks. ELs can continue to express their raw emotions while learning new L2 vocabulary and sharing experiences on their personalized masks. Folse (2004)

emphasized the need for more creative learning strategies and extensive use of new words to improve L2 vocabulary acquisition in the classroom. Vocabulary masks, critical and creative writing, and oral presentations can inspire a new group of storytellers among ELs around the world.

References

Folse, K. (2004). *Vocabulary myths: Applying second language research to classroom teaching*.
University of Michigan Press.

Appendix A: Educational Vocabulary During COVID-19

face-to-face mask-to-mask 6 feet apart social distancing

online versus traditional classes / asynchronous versus synchronous

hybrid – remote learning – distance learning – virtual classrooms

CEP Community Education Program

Microsoft Teams Zoom WhatsApp WeChat Tik Tok

WFH – work from home/working from home

PPE – personal protective equipment

COVID-19 new economic and health words, acronyms, and connotations:

COVID-19 is an acronym - Coronavirus Disease of 2019, contact tracing, essential business, temperature checks, CDC Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ,WHO World Health Organization, epidemic versus pandemic, reemployment versus unemployment, DEO Department of Economic Opportunity in Florida, economic impact checks, stimulus checks, healthcare.gov, first responders, front line health care workers, global pandemic, death toll, new cases, contagious disease, isolate, quarantine, self-quarantine, social distancing, stay 6 feet apart, lock down, mask up, wear gloves, disinfect, hand sanitizers, vaccine passport, herd immunity, Pfizer/Moderna/Johnson & Johnson/Janssen vaccinations

Appendix B: Examples of Vocabulary Masks

