Building blocks for language learning – unfolding the process of vocabulary teaching
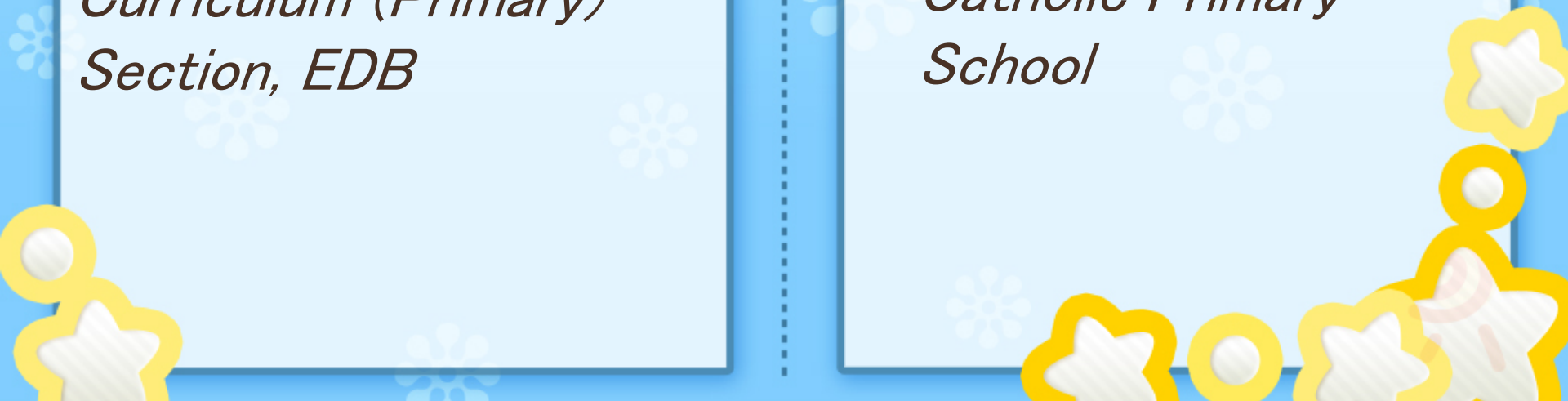
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Speakers

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Our expectation today

Obtain a pile of vocabulary worksheets?

Get hold of a set of documents on the vocabulary curriculum?

Refresh ourselves on the teaching ideas/ strategies on vocabulary teaching?

Share and discuss the problems and the lessons we learn in the teaching of vocabulary

What are the problems our students have in vocabulary learning?

Don't know how to spell the words

Cannot recognize the learnt words in reading texts

Not able to use the learnt words in writing

We want our students to **understand** and then **memorize** the words so that they can **recognize** them in new texts, can **spell** them **correctly** in dictation, and can **use** them **in their writing**.

What goes wrong in the process of vocabulary learning?

How do our students learn / acquire vocabulary?

Learn **directly** in the English classroom

Learn **indirectly** through extensive reading

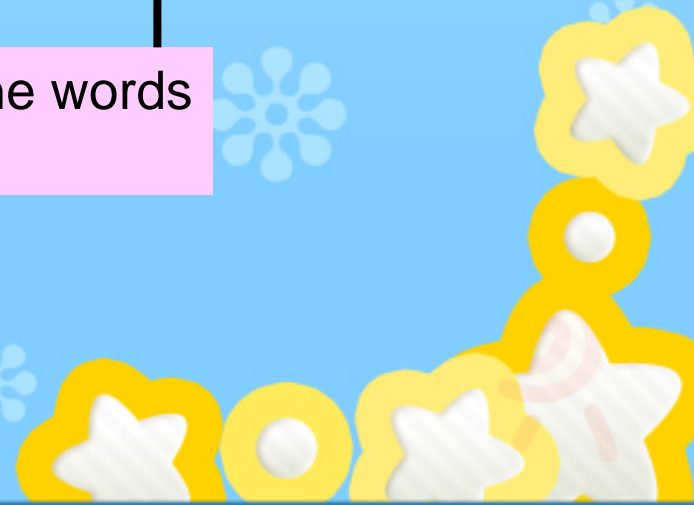# How do our students learn vocabulary in lessons?

Students watch the pictures on ppt slides or flash cards

Students say the words out aloud after the teacher

Dictation on Friday!

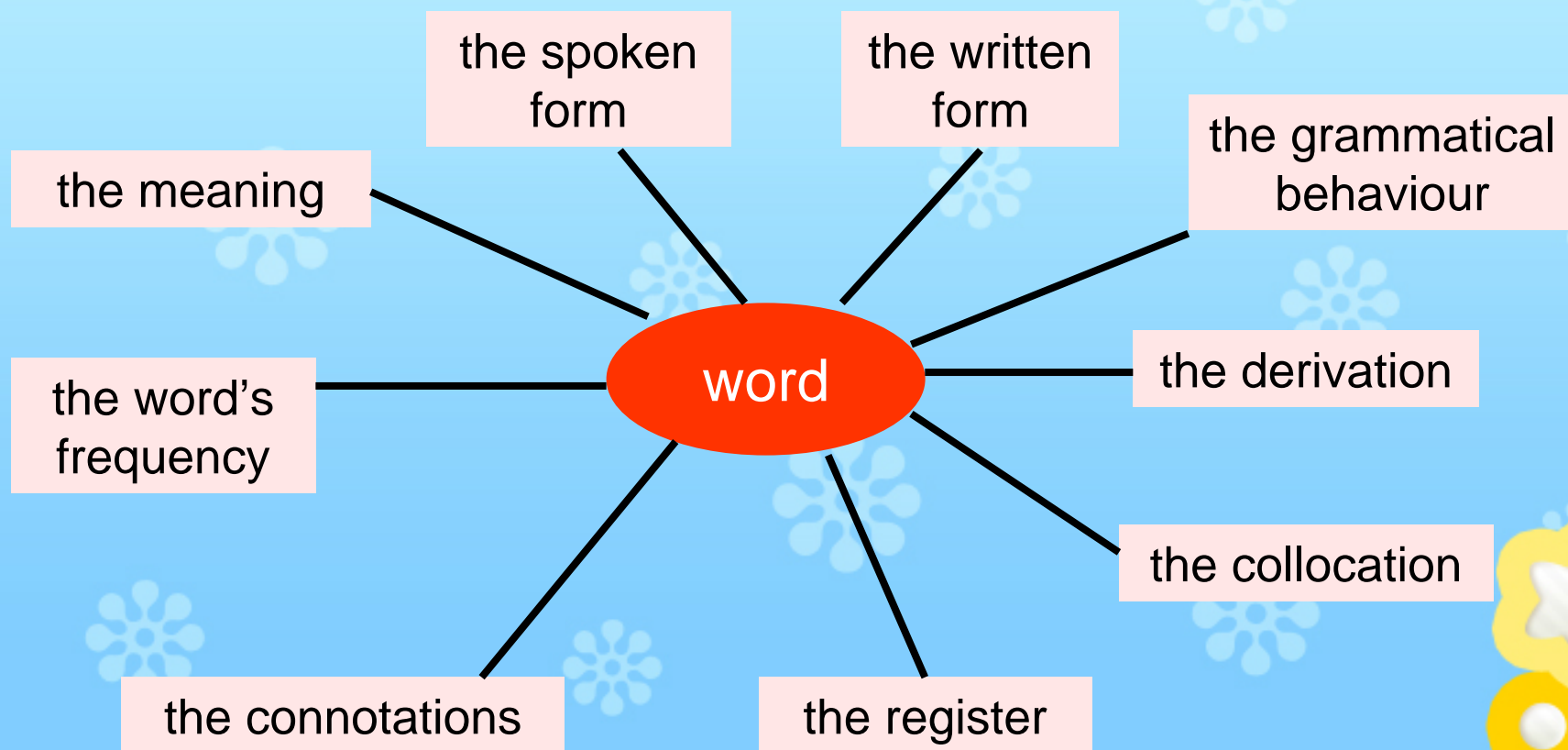Students listen to the teacher say out the words

Revise the words at home

What goes wrong in the process of vocabulary learning?

⭐ What have our students learnt?

⭐ Are the vocabulary taught sufficiently?

⭐ Are our students taught the skills to spell the words?

⭐ Are our students taught to use the vocabulary in their writing?

What do we want our students to learn about the vocabulary?

the spoken form

the written form

the grammatical behaviour

the meaning

word

the word's frequency

the derivation

the collocation

the connotations

the register

Thornbury S. (2002) *How to Teach Vocabulary*. England: Pearson Education Limited

What do we want our students to learn about the vocabulary?

the **graphaphonic** quality:

the spoken form, the written form

word

the **syntactic** quality:

the grammatical behaviour, the collocations, the register, the derivation

the **semantic** quality:

the meaning, the connotations

Yan Tak Catholic Primary School

Our approach in Yan Tak

Introduction

how are vocabulary (mainly from the textbooks) taught in lessons

Vocabulary Learning

Retention

the ways to help students remember the words

Retrieval

the strategies to help students use the words they learnt in tasks

To introduce the graphaphonic quality of the vocabulary

show time

⬠ Do you do the same in your class?

⬠ Do your students acquire the pronunciation?

⬠ Can they pronounce the words correctly after the lessons?

To introduce the graphaphonic quality of the vocabulary

Help students pronounce new words by **activating their previous knowledge** (the small words), e.g. 'ice' in 'rice'. Constant practice had enabled the students to grasp the skill. Therefore, they were able to work out the pronunciation of words like 'scout' and 'discover' by sounding out the small words 'out' and 'cover' first. This strategy works especially well for the less able students.

To introduce the graphaphonic quality of the vocabulary

Students were shown the steps how to sound out the words by joining the onsets and the rimes (e.g. c/ar)

This strategy helped students sound out old and new words using the same rime e.g. t/ar, b/ar and st/ar.

Direct instruction was followed by pair practice. Teacher was informed that the more students could manage to use the phonic skills taught to sound out the words (a boy was helping his classmate in the practice by following exactly the steps the teacher had shown him previously) while she also had the opportunity to offer help to the less able ones in using the skill taught.

To be continued …

Did the students learn the skills?

Phonics dictation

A. Listen and write the letters. (t, f, b, w, c)
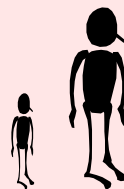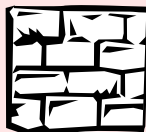
| 1. __all | 2. __all | 3. __all | 4. __all | 5. __all |

Part A: 81.8%

B. Listen and write the letters. (s, f, g, r, b)

| 1. __un | 2. __un | 3. __un | 4. __un | 5. __un |

Part B: 91.3%

C. Listen and write the letters.

| 1. __ar | 2. __ar | 3. __ar | 4. __ar | 5. __ar |

Part C: 72.7%

(*9.09% got 90;

another 9.09% got 80)

C. Listen and write the letters.   Marks : 90 ©Disney

| 1. _j_ ar | 2. _t_ ar | 3. _g_ ar | 4. _b_ ar | 5. _t_ ar |

To introduce the semantic quality of the vocabulary

What do you usually used to teach the meaning of the word?

When we teach the meaning of the words, we are actually enabling students to understand the **concept** conveyed by the words!

In the video segment, the teacher wanted to teach the word 'teacher' by showing her students a picture of a man with two children. This had created a lot of confusion among the students. In her refection, teacher found the understanding of the nature of the vocabulary items and the concepts conveyed (here, 'teacher' denotes human relation) very important. And this would determine the choice of the approaches /strategies used in the instruction.

Different approaches / strategies for different concepts

Visual techniques

- Visuals (flashcards, photos, blackboard drawings and realia)

- Mime and gesture

Verbal techniques

- Use of illustrative situations

- Use of synonymy and definition

- Contrasts and opposites

- Scales

- Examples of the type

Different approaches / strategies for different concepts

Using a dictionary

Contextual guesswork

Translation

Which approaches/ strategies will you use to teach the target vocabulary?

1. rude   2. seldom   3. jobs   4. dive   5. Principal

To introduce the semantic quality of the vocabulary

…means more than enabling our students to merely understand the vocabulary but to build in them a vocabulary network!

Research findings

Freedman & Loftus (1971) asked the testees to perform the following tasks

(Task 1) name **a fruit that begins with a 'p';** and

(Task 2) name **a word beginning with 'p' that is a fruit**.

Which task do you think the testees can answer more quickly?

Our 'mental lexicon' is highly organized and vocabulary that are semantically related are 'stored together'.

To introduce the syntactic quality of the vocabulary

Help students form new words by adding suffixes to the base word

Enhance students' awareness on the change of parts of speech after the addition of the suffixes

Help students consolidate the concept of adding the suffix 'ion' to the base words to form nouns
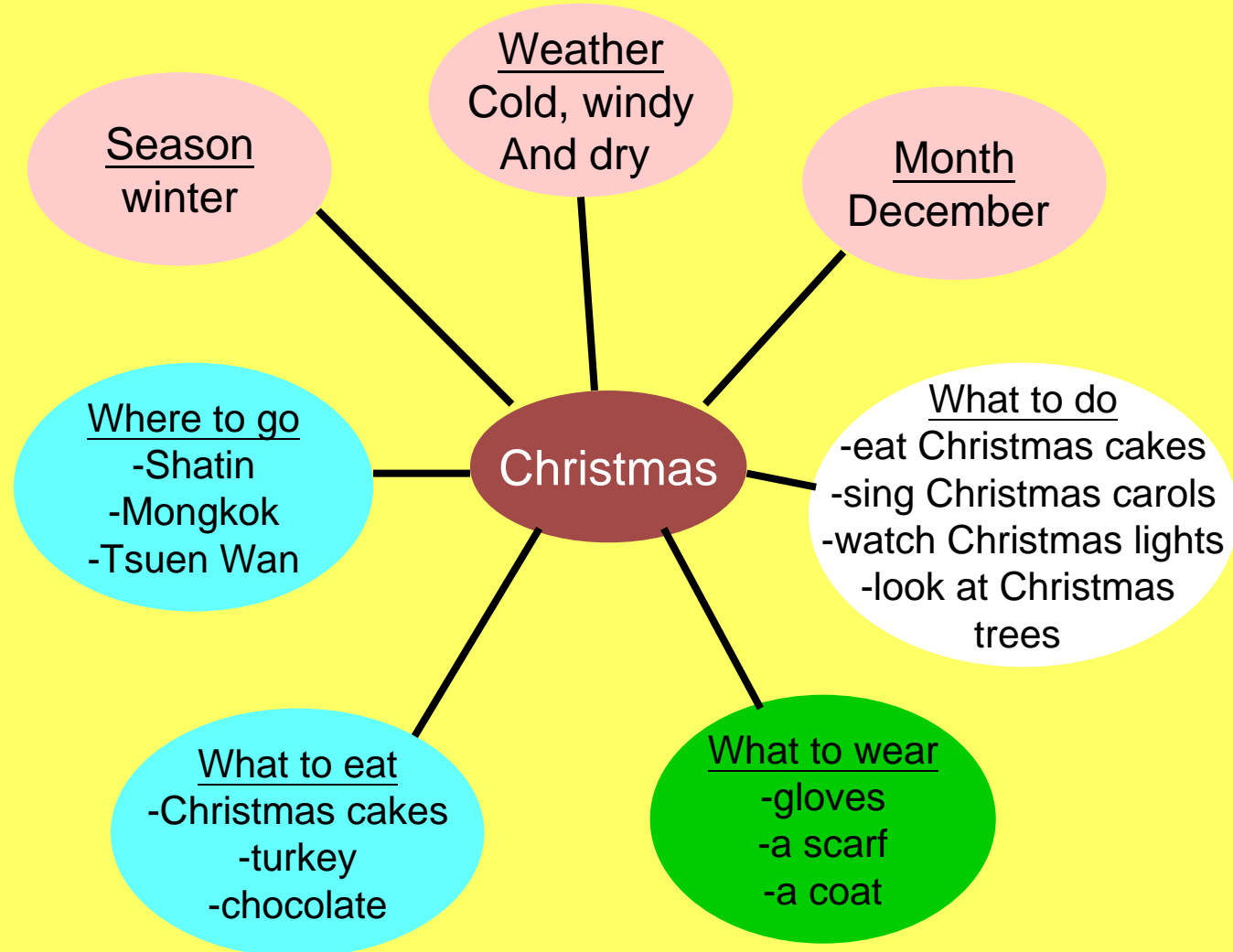
Lessons we learnt

⬠ Let the students do their part first!

⬠ Retrieval of learnt vocabulary can be done every day!

⬠ Keys to success:
- Time!
- Effort!
- Persistence!

Helping students to build a network of vocabulary semantically

Form word webs to help students **recycle** and **retrieve** the previously learnt words

Season
winter

Weather
Cold, windy
And dry

Month
December

Where to go
-Shatin
-Mongkok
-Tsuen Wan

Christmas

What to do
-eat Christmas cakes
-sing Christmas carols
-watch Christmas lights
-look at Christmas trees

What to eat
-Christmas cakes
-turkey
-chocolate

What to wear
-gloves
-a scarf
-a coat

THANK YOU!

Gladys Wong

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