Teaching Language

Things that are staring your in the face are often the hardest to see.

Take for instance the case of language. Whether it be your primary /native language or a foreign language that you can speak fluently, just about any school or curriculum will teach just one set of vocabulary for this language.

This means that the curriculum developer assumes that the learner only needs one set of vocabulary for all his/her four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. One needs only to look at oneself to see the false premise of this assumption. What words do you use in your daily spoken vocabulary? Are they all the words that you understand? When someone speaks to you using words you yourself do not use regularly, do you understand them? Similarly, when you write, you tend to stick to your personal favorite range of words. Yet, when you read, you understand a much wider range of words!

What are the implications of this simple fact on the mechanics of teaching a language? Which set of vocabulary should a curriculum teach? The common set? All four sets?

Pax Academy proposes that all four sets should be addressed, in a manner that differentiates their learning. If you learn how to say, “I would like to drink some water.” Then you should learn to “understand” the words tea, coffee, juice, soda, and so on concurrently. For a further discussion on language learning, please visit www.paxacademy.org.