

SERIES EDITOR

English
Language
Teacher
Development
Series

■ Thomas S. C. Farrell

By Michael Lessard-Clouston

Teaching Vocabulary

Teaching Vocabulary

Michael Lessard-Clouston

English
Language
Teacher
Development
Series

Thomas S. C. Farrell,
Series Editor

Typeset in Janson and Frutiger
by Capitol Communications, LLC, Crofton, Maryland USA
and printed by Gascah Printing, LLC, Odenton, Maryland USA

TESOL International Association
1925 Ballenger Avenue
Alexandria, Virginia 22314 USA
Tel 703-836-0774 • Fax 703-836-7864

Publishing Manager: Carol Edwards
Cover Design: Tomiko Breland
Copyeditor: Jean House

TESOL Book Publications Committee
John I. Liontas, Chair

Maureen S. Andrade	Joe McVeigh
Jennifer Lebedev	Gail Schafers
Robyn L. Brinks Lockwood	Lynn Zimmerman

Project overview: John I. Liontas and Robyn L. Brinks Lockwood
Reviewer: Soonyoung Hwang An

Copyright © 2013 by TESOL International Association

All rights reserved. Copying or further publication of the contents of this work are not permitted without permission of TESOL International Association, except for limited “fair use” for educational, scholarly, and similar purposes as authorized by U.S. Copyright Law, in which case appropriate notice of the source of the work should be given.

Every effort has been made to contact the copyright holders for permission to reprint borrowed material. We regret any oversights that may have occurred and will rectify them in future printings of this work.

PDF ISBN 9781942223931

Contents

	Preface.....	v
1	Vocabulary and Its Importance in Language Learning	1
2	Understanding Vocabulary: A L2 Perspective	8
3	Research Into Practice: Tips for Vocabulary Teaching.....	16
4	Getting to Know Your Students and Their Vocabulary Needs.....	24
5	Putting It Together: Vocabulary Teaching Guidelines	32
	References	38

About the Author

Michael Lessard-Clouston teaches applied linguistics and TESOL at Biola University (La Mirada, California, USA). He has taught in Canada, China, Indonesia, and Japan, and his recent publications have appeared in *The Linguistics Journal* and edited collections.

Series Editor's Preface

The English Language Teacher Development (ELTD) Series consists of a set of short resource books for English language teachers that are written in a jargon-free and accessible manner for all types of teachers of English (native and nonnative speakers of English, experienced and novice teachers). The ELTD Series is designed to offer teachers a theory-to-practice approach to English language teaching, and each book offers a wide variety of practical teaching approaches and methods for the topic at hand. Each book also offers opportunities for teachers to interact with the materials presented. The books can be used in preservice settings or in-service courses and can also be used by individuals looking for ways to refresh their practice.

Michael Lessard-Clouston's book *Teaching Vocabulary* explores different approaches to teaching vocabulary in English language classrooms. Lessard-Clouston provides a comprehensive overview of the place and importance of vocabulary in English language acquisition and teaching in an easy-to-follow guide that language teachers will find very practical for their own contexts. Topics covered include understanding vocabulary, the importance of vocabulary, relevant research findings that impact vocabulary, knowing your students' vocabulary levels, and how to teach vocabulary effectively. *Teaching Vocabulary* is a valuable addition to the literature in our profession.

I am very grateful to the authors who contributed to the ELTD Series for sharing their knowledge and expertise with other TESOL professionals because they have done so willingly and without any

compensation to make these short books affordable to language teachers throughout the world. It was truly an honor for me to work with each of these authors as they selflessly gave up their valuable time for the advancement of TESOL.

Thomas S. C. Farrell

Vocabulary and Its Importance in Language Learning

This book is about vocabulary teaching, but it is necessary first to establish what *vocabulary* means to focus on teaching it. This introductory chapter reminds readers of the importance of vocabulary to language learning.

What Is Vocabulary?

Throughout this short book I hope to engage you, the reader, directly in thinking about English vocabulary and the teaching of it to students learning English as a second or foreign language. As you begin, please stop and answer the question asked in the header above.

REFLECTIVE BREAK

- My definition(s) of English vocabulary:

Your answer likely has something to do with the *words of a language*, which is perhaps how most people think of vocabulary, and that is correct because vocabulary does deal with words. Yet vocabulary is much more than just single words, as this book will demonstrate. Recent vocabulary studies draw on an understanding of *lexis*, the Greek for *word*, which in English “refers to all the words in a language, the

entire vocabulary of a language” (Barcroft, Sunderman, & Schmitt, 2011, p. 571). So it will probably not surprise you to learn that vocabulary also includes *lexical chunks*, phrases of two or more words, such as *Good morning* and *Nice to meet you*, which research suggests children and adults learn as single lexical units. Phrases like these involve more than one word but have a clear, formulaic usage and make up a significant portion of spoken or written English language usage. Also called *formulaic sequences* (Alali & Schmitt, 2012), they are central to English vocabulary learning and therefore worth teachers’ attention as they teach vocabulary (Lewis, 1993).

So vocabulary can be defined as *the words of a language, including single items and phrases or chunks of several words which convey a particular meaning, the way individual words do*. Vocabulary addresses single lexical items—words with specific meaning(s)—but it also includes lexical phrases or chunks.

The Importance of Vocabulary

Vocabulary is central to English language teaching because without sufficient vocabulary students cannot understand others or express their own ideas. Wilkins (1972) wrote that “. . . while without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary *nothing* can be conveyed” (pp. 111–112). This point reflects my experience with different languages; even without grammar, with some useful words and expressions, I can often manage to communicate. Lewis (1993) went further to argue, “lexis is the core or heart of language” (p. 89). Particularly as students develop greater fluency and expression in English, it is significant for them to acquire more productive vocabulary knowledge and to develop their own personal vocabulary learning strategies.

Students often instinctively recognize the importance of vocabulary to their language learning. As Schmitt (2010) noted, “learners carry around dictionaries and not grammar books” (p. 4). Teaching vocabulary helps students understand and communicate with others in English. Voltaire purportedly said, “Language is very difficult to put into words.” I believe English language students generally would concur, yet learning vocabulary also helps students master English for their purposes.

Aspects of Vocabulary Knowledge

The concept of a *word* can be defined in various ways, but three significant aspects teachers need to be aware of and focus on are *form*, *meaning*, and *use*. According to Nation (2001), the *form* of a word involves its pronunciation (spoken form), spelling (written form), and any word parts that make up this particular item (such as a prefix, root, and suffix). An example for word parts can be seen with the word *uncommunicative*, where the prefix *un-* means *negative* or *opposite*, *communicate* is the root word, and *-ive* is a suffix denoting that someone or something is able to do something. Here, they all go together to refer to someone or something that is not able to communicate, hence *uncommunicative*.

Nation (2001) stated that *meaning* encompasses the way that form and meaning work together, in other words, the concept and what items it refers to, and the associations that come to mind when people think about a specific word or expression. *Use*, Nation noted, involves the grammatical functions of the word or phrase, collocations that normally go with it, and finally any constraints on its use, in terms of frequency, level, and so forth. For *form*, *meaning*, and *use*, Nation (2001) declared there is both a receptive and productive dimension, so knowing these three aspects for each word or phrase actually involves 18 different types of lexical knowledge, as summarized in Table 1.

When teachers teach vocabulary to build students' knowledge of words and phrases, helping them learn any and all of these different components assists them in enhancing their English vocabulary knowledge and use. After you have looked through Table 1, please do the Reflective Break, which is to consider your students' particular strengths and weaknesses with English in terms of these three aspects of vocabulary knowledge.

REFLECTIVE BREAK

- My impression of my students' strengths and weaknesses with English vocabulary:

Strengths	Weaknesses

Table 1. What Is Involved in Knowing a Word

Aspect	Component	Receptive knowledge	Productive knowledge
Form	spoken	What does the word sound like?	How is the word pronounced?
	written	What does the word look like?	How is the word written and spelled?
	word parts	What parts are recognizable in this word?	What word parts are needed to express the meaning?
Meaning	form and meaning	What meaning does this word form signal?	What word form can be used to express this meaning?
	concepts and referents	What is included in this concept?	What items can the concept refer to?
	associations	What other words does this make people think of?	What other words could people use instead of this one?
Use	grammatical functions	In what patterns does the word occur?	In what patterns must people use this word?
	collocations	What words or types of words occur with this one?	What words or types of words must people use with this one?
	constraints on use (register, frequency . . .)	Where, when, and how often would people expect to meet this word?	Where, when, and how often can people use this word?

Source: Adapted from Nation (2001, p. 27).

Each person's response here will vary because vocabulary knowledge is very personal. Some teachers are good at the grammatical functions of particular words or phrases, for example, and others have a strong knowledge of English word parts. I encourage you to begin with your students' strengths, because every person has some vocabulary knowledge that is relevant to English, even if it derives from his or her own native language. Aim to build on learners' strengths and also recognize various weaknesses. For example, many students read in English and thus may be adept at recognizing meaning in terms of concepts and referents, but if they have not heard the words and phrases they are reading, then they may be weak at recognizing them when they hear them spoken or weak at pronouncing them when they read something out loud. Sometimes students learning English as a foreign language (EFL) are weaker at recognizing particular constraints on vocabulary usage, such as the fact that only young people use a particular word or expression, which might be colloquial and not usually deemed appropriate in more formal contexts such as speeches. Yet if teachers are aware of their students' strengths and weaknesses in English vocabulary, then they have a place to start to expand students' knowledge and strengthen weaker areas.

Perhaps as you reflect on the information in Table 1 you find the task of teaching English vocabulary a little daunting. If so, you are not alone! There is much that teachers and students need to learn to understand and use words and phrases correctly in different situations. This book does not claim to cover it all but instead aims to help you understand important issues from recent vocabulary research and theory so that you may approach teaching vocabulary in a principled, thoughtful way. It will also help you reflect on vocabulary teaching in your particular context and ways that you might improve your vocabulary teaching.

Developing a Love for Vocabulary Learning

Because it is a changing, growing reality, English vocabulary is challenging. As Ur (2012) aptly stated, unlike grammar, "lexical items . . . are an open set, constantly being added to (and lost, as archaic words gradually go out of use)" (p. 3). Perhaps this situation is most evident with computer-related vocabulary, such as the *Internet*, *e-mail*, and

Web browser, which was not commonly used even 15 years ago. Now, though, everyone seems to know these items and how important such realities are to their lives and work. English vocabulary's expansion is exciting, but it also means that teachers and students alike need to be in the habit of learning vocabulary.

People can expand their English vocabulary knowledge in many different ways. As a native English speaker, I have been learning vocabulary for many years, but I am still a learner because English vocabulary changes and grows. Occasionally, I come across an unknown word or phrase (or a new usage for one I already know) in something in print or online, or that I hear on the radio or television. I will stop to consider what it might mean in that particular context, and make a guess. If I have a dictionary close by, I will check it for the word or phrase, or if I am at my computer I will check an online dictionary. Words and phrases fascinate me, and if new ones seem useful, then these vocabulary items are ones I may later use in my own speech or writing—even if it is to comment on this new vocabulary item! Whatever their personality and learning style, both teachers and students can develop a growing love for English vocabulary learning and naturally share a passion for words and phrases in any language.

REFLECTIVE BREAK

- What aspects of English vocabulary currently interest you?
- What two or three strategies for learning English words and phrases do you model and teach?

One resource that teachers may explore to model and teach English words and phrases is the Web site, <http://freerice.com/>, which calls itself “the world’s only vocabulary game that feeds the hungry.” Through the World Food Programme (WFP), this site allows those with Internet access to check their vocabulary knowledge using multiple-choice questions. For every correct answer 10 grains of rice are donated through the WFP to help feed the hungry. Your students can even practice listening to target words by clicking on an icon,

which can help with hearing and repeating the spoken form. You might bookmark this site and share it with your students.

Conclusion

English vocabulary is complex, with three main aspects related to form, meaning, and use, as well as layers of meaning connected to the roots of individual words (Nation & Meara, 2010). Teaching vocabulary is not just about words; it involves lexical phrases and knowledge of English vocabulary and how to go about learning and teaching it, which the next chapter explores.

REFLECTIVE BREAK

- What is something important you learned about vocabulary from this chapter?

2

Understanding Vocabulary: A L2 Perspective

This chapter develops a more detailed second language (L2) perspective in teaching vocabulary to English language learners (ELLs). It addresses the grammar–vocabulary relationship, word families, personal aspects of vocabulary knowledge, and three kinds of English vocabulary.

Grammar and Vocabulary

English language teaching often distinguishes grammar and vocabulary. This distinction can be useful, but as Lewis (1993) declared, teachers should remember that “language consists of grammaticalised lexis, not lexicalised grammar” (p. 51). You may not know much grammar, but if you know some vocabulary you can still communicate. Vocabulary teachers should recognize the *lexicogrammar* of language—the way that grammar and vocabulary work together to enable English language users to communicate effectively.

Zimmerman (2009) reminds teachers that “grammar provides important information about meaning, and meaning determines how a word is used” (p. 55). It is thus helpful to let students know if a word being taught is a noun, verb, adjective, or adverb, for example, and any special information about it, such as whether the noun is countable or if a verb always takes a complement and, if so, what type, such as verb plus infinitive, gerund, or either of these. Unfortunately, most English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) teacher training programs tend to neglect vocabulary but emphasize grammar. I hope this book will help such programs and guide readers to understand and teach

as though grammar and vocabulary are not at odds with one another. Instead, they work together, which teachers need to help students understand. Vocabulary may not always be as clear-cut, right or wrong, as grammar. Even with good grammar skills, English language learners will not be able to communicate effectively without sufficient English vocabulary knowledge and learning strategies.

REFLECTIVE BREAK

- Take a moment to reflect on a word or phrase that you recently taught, and think about any important grammar and vocabulary connections using these questions:
 - What part of speech (e.g., noun, verb, adjective, adverb) is the word?
 - Does the word have any irregular or unexpected forms?
 - Collocations: Does the word or phrase typically follow particular words, or precede certain others (such as complements)?

Did you address any of the Reflective Break questions above as you taught the word or phrase you thought of? Teachers should be aware of these issues when they teach new vocabulary. As Zimmerman (2009) observed, the difficulty of learning certain words varies, depending on whether there are irregular plural or past forms, and it appears that nouns and verbs are easier to learn than adjectives and adverbs. As much as possible, teachers can indirectly teach that a noun is countable by using *a* or *an* with it (e.g., *an apple*) and that something is a verb by introducing it in the infinitive form (e.g., *to organize*). Ideally, teachers should give students example sentences when introducing new vocabulary, to provide as much context and as many clues as possible. A teacher might write, for example, *The student offered her teacher an apple before she helped him to organize the desks in the classroom.* Then the teacher can read the sentence out loud or have a student do so, so that the class has opportunities to interact with the form, meaning, and use of these two target vocabulary items. Zimmerman (2009) also recommended that teachers train students to understand and use the

grammatical information included in their dictionaries and offers some suggestions for doing so, particularly for information that will help students practise using new words.

Word Families

From a L2 perspective, with vocabulary it is helpful to think of *word families*, which are sets of related word forms starting with a base or root word (with one main meaning) plus its *inflected* forms and derivations (Nation, 2001). Inflected forms often relate to verb forms, such as *-s*, *-ed*, and *-ing*, but inflexions and *derivatives* usually concern affixation in English, mentioned in Chapter 1 in discussing prefixes and suffixes with *uncommunicative*. So for *observe*, the word family includes the inflections *observes*, *observed*, and *observing*, plus the derivatives *observation*, *observable*, *observant*, and *observer*. Some word forms in this word family are more frequently used than others, but they all relate to the root word *to observe*. Teachers should indicate, however, that different meanings for the same written form, such as *pupil* (a student or the centre of the eye), are considered different words in this view. Most research today assumes that students who know one member of a word family will have some access to the others, but this is not necessarily always the case, so teachers should not make that assumption. English language students are often unaware of these distinctions, so teaching them common prefixes and suffixes in English will help them expand their vocabulary knowledge.

REFLECTIVE BREAK

- Choose two words, and then write down the various members of the word family for each. I recommend you first choose a common word (such as *play*), plus one other word that comes to mind.

English Word Families

a. _____

b. _____

This task will often lead you to your dictionary, and this is one occasion when a hard-copy dictionary may trump an electronic one. That is because with most electronic dictionaries you may only see one short entry, whereas when you open a page in your hard-copy dictionary to the noun *a friend* or the verb *to friend* you can easily see it followed by *friendless*, *friendly*, and *friendship*. As this example indicates, using a printed dictionary allows someone to glimpse one or two pages of entries at a time, but it nonetheless tends to show word forms in a word family created using suffixes. It does not normally reveal the related forms created with prefixes, such as *to befriend* or *to unfriend*.

In my experience, it can be helpful to teach common, related forms together, such as *a friend* (noun), *to friend/to befriend* (verb), and *friendly* (adjective). It also helps to ask students about where they have seen these items used, as in *to friend* or *to unfriend* someone on the social networking service Facebook. I do not try to teach every member of a word family at once, but sometimes it helps to let students know there is (or is not) a related noun, verb, adjective, or adverb form. For instance, *friendly* is a common adjective, *friendly* is not commonly used as an adverb anymore, and in sports the noun *a friendly* means a game played for practice rather than to win. These are the types of things students can also write on vocabulary cards or in their vocabulary notebook, which are two other key vocabulary learning strategies.

Vocabulary Knowledge Is Personal

Two important distinctions for vocabulary knowledge are worth reviewing. First, there is expressive or *productive* vocabulary, which is used in one's speech or writing, and *receptive* vocabulary, which is used to understand or associate meanings in reading or listening. This distinction was reflected in Table 1 in Chapter 1, with questions concerning receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge and use. Second is *breadth* (i.e., quantity, the number of words known) versus *depth* (i.e., quality) of knowledge of a word or phrase, its use, meaning, and so forth. Because vocabulary knowledge is personal, individuals have various degrees of knowledge of specific lexical items. Typically, however, learners have greater receptive vocabulary knowledge, and more breadth than depth knowledge of individual words or phrases. Students

tend to develop more productive vocabulary knowledge based on their receptive knowledge of words or phrases. Similarly, they usually obtain greater depth of vocabulary knowledge of individual items as they use words and phrases in writing and speaking, as well as through reading or listening.

REFLECTIVE BREAK

- Answer these questions about your students' vocabulary knowledge.
 - What types of vocabulary do your students need productive knowledge of? What kinds of words can they get away with simple receptive knowledge of?
 - What are aspects of English vocabulary where students need to develop more depth of vocabulary knowledge? How might you do so?

People have topics and activities for which they need to be specific and thus need productive knowledge of relevant vocabulary for speaking or writing, and they likely also have subjects for which they simply need to understand particular items. Your students likely have a wider breadth of vocabulary knowledge but a smaller number of words and formulaic expressions for which they have greater depth of vocabulary knowledge. This is normal but may also encourage you to help students develop greater depth of knowledge of words and phrases they already know.

Each person has specific hobbies or areas of expertise and likely knows some specialist or technical vocabulary. My son, for example, has belts in judo and jujitsu, and as a result he has receptive and productive knowledge of various terms for particular throws, holds, and moves in those sports. It can be encouraging to students to help them recognize some areas of expertise where they can easily learn English terminology and help others acquire this knowledge. Many young people, for example, are familiar with computer vocabulary and can quickly learn or use it in English.

REFLECTIVE BREAK

- In your classes, what types of specialist knowledge do your students typically have? How might they transfer this knowledge into their English vocabulary usage? Consider students' hobbies, sports, and other areas of expertise.

It is always useful to connect with students' previous knowledge and experience as they approach lessons in a new language. Everywhere I have been a teacher, I have discovered that students like to talk about their hobbies and other areas of interest and expertise. Nowadays the Internet allows students to find English language blogs, videos, and texts that relate to their passions, such as cooking, baseball, or travelling. It would be great to develop lessons so that students can connect knowledge in these areas to their presentations, journaling, and so forth, in their English classes and homework. How might you go about working on personal aspects of vocabulary with your students?

Three Kinds of English Vocabulary

The dominant approach to vocabulary in English language teaching is a frequency perspective, because the vocabulary of English is so large (Schmitt & Schmitt, in press). Essentially, this *frequency approach* suggests that teachers should teach students the most common words in English first, so that they will have the most frequent words at their disposal.

Research over the years has drawn on *corpora*, large collections of texts, to analyze English vocabulary, resulting in three main levels of frequency. According to Schmitt and Schmitt (in press), the field of teaching ESOL typically addresses three main kinds of vocabulary: high-frequency, mid-frequency, and low-frequency English words. Most *high-frequency* vocabulary is on West's (1953) general service list (GSL) of 2,000 words plus Coxhead's (2006) academic word list (AWL) of 570 items common in academia. However, to read for pleasure, watch television, or comprehend most English language textbooks, some understanding of *mid-frequency* vocabulary is required

(Schmitt & Schmitt, in press). This ranges from around the 3,000- to 9,000-word frequency levels, with the higher number being the beginning of *low-frequency* English vocabulary.

Based on this division, vocabulary specialists suggest ensuring that all students learn the general, high-frequency words from the GSL first because it is the most useful vocabulary. For English language students preparing to study at college or university in English, the AWL is highly recommended, as is learning some *technical* vocabulary of their chosen academic discipline. Research on technical vocabulary suggests that each field has several hundred technical words and phrases, but that they also come from the three levels—high-, mid-, and low-frequency English vocabulary, with discipline-specific meanings and uses (Lessard-Clouston, 2010). Because low-frequency vocabulary represents many thousands of words, Nation (2008) and others recommend that students develop vocabulary-learning strategies to learn to deal with low-frequency words as they come across them in reading and listening.

REFLECTIVE BREAK

- A word's frequency is key to understanding its usefulness and pedagogical relevance.
 - Visit the Frequency Trainer at <http://www.lex tutor.ca/freq/train/> to take a quiz on the frequency of 10–15 words, rating whether each belongs to the 1,000–2,000, 3,000–5,000, 6,000–10,000, or 11,000–15,000 frequency bands in English.
 - How is your vocabulary “frequency intuition”?
 - Consider whether these words are ones your students know, should know, or are likely not to need to learn at this stage.

To choose appropriate words and phrases for students to study and learn, it is important for teachers to understand the high-, mid-, and low-frequency levels of vocabulary in English. McCrostie's (2007) research indicated that “teachers cannot always identify the most fre-

quent words in the English language and should consult frequency lists in conjunction with their intuitions” (p. 62). So if you struggled with some of the words in the Reflective Break above, you are not alone! As McCrostie suggests, it is best to check word frequency lists, rather than simply rely on intuition. Leech, Rayson, and Wilson’s (2001) book is useful, but easily accessible frequency lists are also online.

Conclusion

This chapter outlined four topics to introduce a fuller L2 perspective on English vocabulary. It looked at the grammar-vocabulary connection, English word families, the personal nature of vocabulary knowledge, and three main kinds of English vocabulary.

REFLECTIVE BREAK

- Please read the following vignette and then answer the questions.

Vignette 1: Vocabulary Teaching

Roberta is an ESOL teacher at an adult school connected with a community centre language program in a metropolitan area in the United States. Although many of her students are from Spanish-speaking contexts, she also has some learners from Asia and Europe, and a few from the Middle East and Africa. Their ages range from about 20 through 50 years of age. She is teaching false beginners (students who have already studied English at some point before) an integrated skills course, using a popular textbook from a major publisher of materials for ESOL in the United States. She enjoys using a communicative approach in her lessons, and because her students are all adults Roberta likes to integrate cultural and social aspects of English language use into her classes.

- As you reflect on Roberta’s situation, what is similar to and different from the classes and students you teach? In what ways do you think teaching vocabulary would be easy or difficult in this context? Why?
- What issues from this chapter do you think could perhaps help inform Roberta’s teaching?

3

Research Into Practice: Tips for Vocabulary Teaching

This chapter gives a synopsis of nine major research findings that offer English language teachers clear tips for putting them into practice in their vocabulary teaching.

Choose Frequent, Relevant Words to Teach

As noted earlier, currently the dominant view is a frequency perspective on English vocabulary because frequency seems to be the best overall criterion for determining which words to focus on teaching. In essence, “more frequent words are more useful than less frequent words” (Zimmerman & Schmitt, 2005, p. 165), which is why most textbooks emphasize GSL and AWL vocabulary. Teachers should choose frequent, relevant words to teach. Although there are various frequency lists (some of which are mentioned in Chapter 2), it is also important that the words you choose to teach are relevant to your students, based on your teaching objectives and their proficiency level. If students are beginners, then they need to master the GSL’s 1,000-level items; the AWL or another specialist list is simply beyond them. Yet if you teach low-intermediate students, then emphasizing the 2,000 words from the GSL is appropriate.

But . . . Not All Vocabulary Is Created Equal

From a learning perspective, not all English vocabulary is created equal, however, because there are at least three levels of word frequency and the learning burden of a word or phrase involves how

easy or difficult it is for students to learn and use it. In summary, for pronunciation and meaning the learning burden is heavier for longer words, as well as for words for abstract concepts, *polysemous items* (words with multiple definitions), and *false friends* (words similar in form to words in the student's first language (L1), but different in meaning or use). In addition to teaching frequent, relevant words for their courses and students, teachers need to help students learn to reflect carefully on the words they will invest time in studying. Barker (2007, p. 528) recommends students look for answers from teachers, native speakers, or dictionaries to three main questions: Is this a common word? Is it useful for someone at my level to learn? Is there a particular reason I should learn this word now? If teachers choose frequent, relevant words to focus on in class and in homework, then they offer a good model for students; however, students need to take responsibility for their learning, too, especially outside of class. They also need to know that some words are harder to learn than others, yet useful or relevant ones are worth the effort.

REFLECTIVE BREAK

- What vocabulary do you need to help your students acquire? High-, mid-, or low-frequency words? What list(s) or words should you teach?
- How do you help your students take responsibility for their vocabulary learning? Might you use Barker's (2007) three questions with them?

Deliberate Vocabulary Teaching Is Key

Over the years, research has revealed that although people can and do learn word meanings incidentally, such learning most often does not come easily and may not be very effective (Nation, 2008). For ESOL, then, vocabulary teaching is important, and part of a teacher's job is to incorporate deliberate vocabulary teaching into classes to help students develop the breadth and depth of vocabulary knowledge required so that they can use it effectively both receptively and productively. As Nation (2008) declared, although deliberate vocabulary teaching

may not always be efficient, “it is an important part of a well-balanced vocabulary program” (p. 97). Such a program requires explicit vocabulary teaching: giving attention to particular words and phrases; conveying what is involved in knowing a word or phrase; using various types of vocabulary practice activities and review exercises in class and for homework; and giving frequent, repeated attention to vocabulary during every class.

Vocabulary Learning Is Incremental

One reason why deliberate vocabulary teaching is necessary is that research clearly shows that vocabulary learning is an incremental process, due to both the sheer number of lexical items students encounter (and the vocabulary size they will need) and to the detailed knowledge they need to develop of specific lexical items (Schmitt, 2010). Remember the various aspects of vocabulary form, meaning, and use outlined in Table 1? Learning all those components does not come all at once, thankfully, but takes place over time. Research indicates that such aspects of word knowledge seem to go from zero to partial to more precise development, and this is what teachers want to help students understand as they approach their English vocabulary learning. Because vocabulary learning is a process, it is better for students to spend some time studying and reviewing their word cards or words in their vocabulary notebooks each day, rather than cramming for a vocabulary quiz. One great thing about word cards and vocabulary notebooks is that students can add to their entries there (assuming they leave space) as they learn more about words and phrases they are studying. One useful scale moves from receptive to productive word knowledge and is outlined in Table 2.

Table 2. An Incremental Scale of Knowledge of Words and Phrases

I have never seen this word before.	I have seen the word but am not sure what it means.	I understand the word when I see or hear it in a sentence.	I have tried to use this word, but I am not sure I am using it correctly.	I use the word with confidence in either speaking <i>or</i> writing.	I use the word with confidence in both speaking <i>and</i> writing.
-------------------------------------	---	--	---	--	---

Source: Zimmerman (2009, p. 116)

Teachers can help students understand the incremental nature of vocabulary learning, and will ideally help them move along (left to right) this scale of word knowledge as they meet, understand, and start to use new words and phrases, so that they fully master them.

Teach Vocabulary Learning Strategies

Partly because vocabulary learning is a process, it is important for students to have active vocabulary learning strategies that they use for learning and reviewing new words and phrases (Nation, 2008), both on their own and in class. Yet teachers need to model and practise vocabulary learning strategies in their classes as well as ask students to use them there and elsewhere. In a Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) preparation course, for example, in each class I introduced and modelled a new strategy that students could use to build their vocabulary knowledge, which is crucial for success on any important test. In other courses, in going through a reading together the students practise using contextual clues as they come across words they are unfamiliar with, and I have written words on the board and asked students to break them down into prefixes, roots, and suffixes, brainstorming potential meanings. Students in my classes have used dictionaries to examine what they say not only about a word's meaning, but also its form and usage. These strategies, as well as using word cards, are some that Nation and Meara (2010) recommend. Students will be more likely to use such strategies if they see how they will help improve their vocabulary knowledge and use.

REFLECTIVE BREAK

- What are one or two specific ways that you can deliberately teach vocabulary in one of the classes you offer?
- Think of how your knowledge of a specific word has grown over time (perhaps a multi-definition item). Write out how you can use this example with students in a particular class.
- What vocabulary learning strategies do you model in your classes? How can you teach such strategies more systematically in one course?

Vocabulary Practice Is Necessary to Enable Productive Use

Although many factors influence vocabulary knowledge, practice is necessary for learners to move receptive knowledge into productive use (as in Table 2). Schmitt (2010, p. 26) stated, “the more a learner engages with a new word, the more likely he/she is to learn it.” Receptive knowledge is important, but if students do little more than read or hear a new word, they are unlikely to remember it, let alone use it. If, however, they interact with the word (say or write it) and think about its meaning and any similarities (grammatical, etc.) to other words they know, then the incremental learning discussed here is more likely to happen. For this reason, Schmitt (2008) concluded that “anything that leads to more and better engagement should improve vocabulary learning, and thus promoting engagement is the most fundamental task for teachers and materials writers, and indeed, learners themselves” (pp. 339–340).

Provide Many Exposures to New Vocabulary in Class

The learning and practice noted here requires many exposures to new words and phrases, and this should therefore be a teacher’s major goal. Estimates for the number of times someone needs to encounter a new word to learn it vary widely, but 10–20 exposures to new words and phrases have been found to be important to learning many of the aspects of vocabulary knowledge in Table 1 (Schmitt, 2010, p. 348). As Folse (2011) stated, “The single most important aspect of any vocabulary practice activity is not so much what ELLs do with the word but rather the number of times ELLs interact with the word” (p. 364). Folse thus recommended that teachers model and encourage many uses and retrievals of words they are teaching through short interactions with students about such words in class. This might include writing the word on the board along with other new vocabulary items, asking students questions about the words or concepts, different categories (e.g., people, actions, adjectives) for the words in question, and personal questions that require students to think about these lexical items. We can also encourage students to write such words down in

sentences in their notebooks, listen to and repeat their pronunciation, and so forth.

REFLECTIVE BREAK

- What activities do you use in class to help students practise new vocabulary? What are some additional ways you can encourage students to engage with new words and phrases?
- Consider a particular language lesson you teach. What are 5–10 vocabulary items it requires you teach? And what are several specific ways you can provide students with different types of exposures to these words?

Textbooks Seldom Address Vocabulary Sufficiently

One reason teachers need to ensure that students have frequent encounters with new words and phrases in their courses is that textbooks seldom address vocabulary sufficiently. Brown (2011), for example, analyzed nine commonly used ESOL textbooks and all the vocabulary activities in them. Of the aspects of vocabulary knowledge in Table 1, Brown (2011) found that the most prominent focus was almost uniquely on form and meaning, with vocabulary use receiving much less attention. Thus, word parts, associations, concepts, collocations, and constraints on vocabulary use were seldom addressed. Brown (2011) noted, “For teachers the main implication . . . is that they should take responsibility for ensuring that their learners have opportunities to learn about the different aspects of vocabulary knowledge” (p. 94).

Teachers also should not expect students to learn a significant amount of vocabulary from their textbooks. O’Loughlin (2012) studied the vocabulary in three levels of a popular EFL textbook series for vocabulary input and concluded that over the course of 3 years of using these texts a relatively small percentage of GSL and AWL items would be introduced. He therefore concluded, “It is necessary for the teacher to guide learners to study words which are useful, and provide information on . . . deliberate learning strategies” (O’Loughlin, 2012, pp. 264–265).

Deliberate Vocabulary Learning Is Important, Too

Students in English language classes must be involved in a deliberate vocabulary-learning program if they are going to acquire the amount of English vocabulary required for them to become proficient speakers and writers on topics important for them to communicate about with others. As Folse (2011) argued, “the most successful learners are those who have a very specific concrete plan of action and consistently carry it out” (p. 365). Part of the teacher’s job is to help students develop such a plan. This may involve extensive reading, which typically uses graded readers with a controlled number of vocabulary items in them to enable students to read for pleasure without encountering too many unknown words [see <http://extensivereading.net/>]. Although it typically requires an extensive reading library of books at varied levels, nowadays such programs might also involve various online resources. One I appreciate is <http://www.beeoasis.com/>, which emphasizes learning “English through the power of big ideas, made easy.” It enables students not only to read short or longer texts, but in some cases to also listen to such texts or to watch short videos about related topics.

REFLECTIVE BREAK

- Examine your current textbook. What does it say about the vocabulary included? What aspects of Table 1 do you see addressed in activities and exercises? Which seem to be neglected?
- Think of a particular course you teach. What steps can you take to help students develop a deliberate vocabulary-learning program? Think of tasks students can use to practise vocabulary related to your course.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined nine tips for teaching vocabulary based on research findings and offered questions to help readers think about applying them in their teaching. Vocabulary learning is important, and vocabulary teaching can and should support it. Teachers thus need to know their students and their vocabulary needs, which the next chapter explores.

4

Getting to Know Your Students and Their Vocabulary Needs

To teach students vocabulary effectively, it is important to know them and their English vocabulary needs. This chapter offers some suggestions and four steps you can take. First, please take time to answer the following questions about one class you teach.

REFLECTIVE BREAK

- Think of your students' background, education, and language proficiency. What vocabulary knowledge do they have at this point?
- Consider your students' learning goals and your course objectives. Do students need to learn academic vocabulary (for reading, etc.)? To be able to listen to lectures? To write short essays? To pass a specific test?

Step 1: Determine Your Students' Vocabulary Level

The first step requires that you understand what vocabulary your students have some knowledge of as they start your course. If you are teaching a higher level after an initial course, you can hopefully examine what topics and vocabulary were covered in the previous course students completed, through the text, materials, tests, and so forth. You can also talk with teachers to learn what vocabulary strengths or weaknesses they observed in their former students. If you have any

placement test results or interview notes, you can review those as well. If you are meeting your students for the first time in class, then that is the time to get to know them. Tests and questionnaires are good ways to gather some useful information.

I have used and recommend Nation's (2008) Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT) to estimate students' receptive vocabulary knowledge. The VLT assesses people's understanding of words from the 2,000 band of the GSL (the second thousand most frequent words); the 3,000-, 5,000- and 10,000-word frequency levels; plus academic vocabulary (from the AWL). It does so using sets of six target words on the left and asks test takers to match three of them with short defining phrases on the right. This VLT is helpful for intermediate or higher students, and depending on their proficiency level, you may only choose to give them the test for a particular level (i.e., the 3,000-level test), because the others (e.g., the 10,000 level) are simply beyond them.

Yet if your students are beginners, Nation and his colleagues have created other options. You can try the 1,000-word-level test, which uses statements and asks test takers to indicate if they are true or false. One item is "This is a square" (with a drawing of a square). Two versions can be photocopied from Nation (2001) and may be useful in ESL classes with students from different language backgrounds. A second option is to use a bilingual version of the 1,000-word-level test, particularly in EFL contexts where your students all have the same L1. It asks them to match sample target 1,000-level English vocabulary with words in their L1. Yet another option is to use Nation and Beglar's (2007) Vocabulary Size Test (VST), which takes 10 sample items to test each of 14 levels representing knowledge of the 14,000 most frequent word families in English. More difficult than the VLT, the VST uses short, monolingual English sentences and multiple-choice definitions, and is most suitable for intermediate through advanced students (for online versions, see <http://www.lexutor.ca/tests/>).

REFLECTIVE BREAK

- For your classes, what methods might you use to discern your students' vocabulary knowledge?
- Which of the tests outlined might you use?
- How?

Diagnostic tests can help you determine your students' vocabulary knowledge and what vocabulary to focus on to meet their English learning objectives. Questionnaires can also help (see Figure 1 for a sample questionnaire).

My experience with questions like those in Figure 1 is that they prompt students to think about their learning goals, current practices, and particular contexts and subjects where I, as a teacher, might be able to help them to focus on vocabulary and vocabulary learning strategies. When using this type of questionnaire with students, however, teachers must follow up on what they learn from it.

Step 2: Decide What Vocabulary to Focus on Teaching

After you use options outlined in Step 1 to see what your students' receptive vocabulary knowledge level is and what their goals are relative to your program or class, you can determine what vocabulary to focus on teaching them. If test results indicate that your students struggle with the 1,000- or 2,000-level words on the GSL, then high-frequency words from those levels should be your priority. You might also choose to adopt a textbook that focuses on such words as well as various points from this book to guide your teaching of this high-frequency vocabulary.

If, however, your students clearly know the GSL vocabulary well, then you will want to emphasize another level, for instance the 3,000- or the 5,000-word level from the VLT. This higher number reflects the mid-frequency vocabulary noted in Chapter 2. If your students are also going to be taking college or university courses in English, then the AWL test is important to examine. You may want to adopt a course-

Vocabulary Questionnaire

Why do you want to learn (more) English?

What do you currently do to learn English vocabulary?

Please give specific examples of places or situations where you need help to understand and communicate better in English:

What specific topics or kinds of vocabulary would you like to focus on learning in this course?

Figure 1. Sample of a Student Vocabulary Questionnaire

book that reviews GSL vocabulary but also introduces AWL items, or you might want to choose one that focuses primarily on the AWL. If results show that students need more mid-frequency vocabulary, then you might want to add a wide reading program or choose a text that focuses on it or even some discipline-specific terminology. The goal is helping students understand their vocabulary knowledge level and then showing them how the vocabulary they, their textbook, and your classes focus on will help them practise what they know and expand their vocabulary knowledge. Be sure to provide opportunities for productive vocabulary knowledge and use in class, too.

REFLECTIVE BREAK

- How might your textbook and other resources help students learn and practise the vocabulary you focus on?

Step 3: Teach Vocabulary and Follow Up

Teachers need to focus their teaching on the learning and use of the appropriate vocabulary in the context of the listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills that students need to practise and develop. In this sense, teachers need to move beyond the macro (vocabulary size) to the micro (specific activities, topics, etc.) perspective. Do students need to learn and use vocabulary for shopping and their hobbies? For academic listening and reading, church, or sports? Are their vocabulary goals more receptive or productive? Drawing on the examples, teaching tips, and perspectives in this book, especially in Chapters 3 and 5, you can teach English vocabulary and help your students to understand and be able to use it to communicate effectively about topics and issues relevant to them.

Yet teaching vocabulary is not yet complete at this point. Teachers must follow up, both with students and in terms of teaching. For students, ideally teachers should help monitor their progress toward their vocabulary learning goals as well as toward curricular ones. Are students reviewing vocabulary they have learned? Are they practising their vocabulary learning strategies? Are they learning to use the words and phrases being taught and focused on? To encourage greater depth of processing, teachers should ensure that students are learning to use new vocabulary in their speech and writing. You might collect students' vocabulary cards or notebooks and offer them encouragement and suggestions through feedback.

Teachers also need to monitor their vocabulary teaching. Are you spending sufficient time on the words and phrases you are targeting? Have you provided rich instruction incorporating vocabulary form, meaning, and use? At times, teachers can focus so much on the trees (individual vocabulary items) that they completely miss the forest (creating a supportive vocabulary learning environment). Teachers should review their lesson plans and ensure adequate focus and time is devoted to vocabulary teaching, student learning, review, and practice, but they can also ask students for their feedback: What seems to be helpful for them to learn and practise new vocabulary? What else might be done to assist them, in class or during office hours?

I recommend teachers occasionally use a *vocabulary minute paper* in class. I hand students a half-sheet of paper and give them 1 minute to

focus on writing down something specific, such as all the new words they have learned that week, what vocabulary strategies they have been practising, any questions they have about vocabulary, and so forth. This task enables me to follow up with students and target various aspects of vocabulary knowledge and learning. It also offers me some feedback on how I am doing in my vocabulary teaching. Usually I do not grade these vocabulary minute papers but rather use them to provide students with some feedback.

REFLECTIVE BREAK

- What question(s) might you ask your class to answer on their vocabulary minute papers?
- Write out one or two questions you can use for a vocabulary minute paper task in a specific course.

Step 4: Assess Your Teaching and Students' Vocabulary Learning

As teachers follow up in class, they can assess whether they need to adjust their vocabulary teaching in any way, and they need to be prepared to make adjustments to help students succeed. Perhaps the most objective measure of vocabulary teaching is to test students on a portion of what has been emphasized in class—words and phrases for specific topics, uses, and so forth. Teachers must be careful to actually test what they have taught, however, and should always consider any test results just one form of evidence for what students have learned. As an incremental process, vocabulary learning is best viewed over time. Results from midterms and final exams that test vocabulary are likely more accurate when complemented by students' vocabulary use in their coursework, to create a more holistic picture of students' vocabulary knowledge and use. Depending on your context, you may want to make vocabulary learning an explicit part of your course grades, which ensures some accountability to students and communicates that you take vocabulary teaching seriously.

At the end of one course, I used a questionnaire on students' vocabulary learning strategies and told them to list as many as 10 words they felt they had learned in class or elsewhere. The next week, I used a questionnaire similar to the one in Figure 2 and gave each student one copy for each word they had listed. You might try this with one word from each student's vocabulary minute paper when you ask for

Vocabulary Knowledge Questionnaire

Word/phrase: _____

1. Please explain the meaning(s) for the word or phrase above:

2. Please use this word or phrase in a complete, correct English sentence:

3. Please check (✓) the word or phrase's part of speech (indicate all you know of):

____ a noun—if yes, please indicate the plural form:

____ a verb—if yes, please indicate the past tense:

____ an adjective—if yes, please indicate the adverb form:

____ an adverb—if yes, please indicate the adjective form:

Figure 2. Vocabulary Knowledge Questionnaire (adapted from Lessard-Clouston, 1996, p. 119)

new words they have recently learned. One advantage of this type of assessment is that it focuses on individual vocabulary learning, and a second advantage is that it then provides both you and your students with feedback on their vocabulary learning. This task deals with form, meaning, and use but also shows that grammatical knowledge is incorporated in vocabulary knowledge.

With this type of questionnaire, you can grade each aspect—perhaps 2 points each for the definition and example sentence, but 1 point for the part of speech, for a total out of 5 (per word or phrase). If a student knows and lists more than one form (e.g., *joy* and *joyfully*), however, you might award bonus points. I like this kind of task because it reflects the things I ask students to include when they record a new vocabulary item on their word cards or in their notebooks.

REFLECTIVE BREAK

- Based on your vocabulary teaching, what other information might you include in a vocabulary knowledge questionnaire? (e.g., pronunciation)

Conclusion

Coming to know students' vocabulary levels can assist teachers in deciding what vocabulary to focus on teaching, monitoring their own teaching, following up with students, and providing a basis for assessing vocabulary teaching and students' learning.

5

Putting It Together: Vocabulary Teaching Guidelines

Although individual students' goals may differ, in English “a large vocabulary is required for language use” (Schmitt, 2010, p. 6). Nation and Meara (2010) argued, for example, that sound knowledge of 4,000–5,000 word families is required for intermediate-level performance, with at least 6,000–9,000 for advanced proficiency. Teachers, then, should help students learn as much vocabulary as possible and as much about each item as required for its productive use (see Table 1). This chapter aims to put it all together by summarizing several approaches that offer clear guidelines for incorporating vocabulary into an ESOL course.

Use Nation's Four Strands for Teaching Vocabulary

Nation (2008) suggested using four equal strands in language teaching. For vocabulary these involve

1. meaning-focused *input* for listening and reading practice, particularly with graded readers,
2. meaning-focused *output* for speaking and writing,
3. *deliberate teaching*, using rich vocabulary instruction, raising students' word consciousness, and modelling vocabulary learning strategies, and
4. developing *fluency* with vocabulary across language skills (by emphasizing practice and helping to make connections with already known vocabulary).

Learners' main jobs, Nation (2008) argued, are to use the vocabulary (i.e., practise), focus on deliberate vocabulary study, and take active responsibility for their vocabulary learning. In contrast, the teacher's main jobs involve planning lessons that incorporate these four strands, training students to use vocabulary learning strategies, testing their vocabulary knowledge and use (and interpreting the results), and teaching vocabulary in a principled fashion. I welcome this division because it helps teachers understand their roles and gives them a clear plan to accomplish their teaching objectives and also enables learners to understand and take responsibility for their own learning in and out of class.

REFLECTIVE BREAK

- Please read Vignette 2 and then answer the questions.

Vignette 2: Vocabulary Learning

Hendro takes EFL courses in academic writing and TOEFL preparation as an undergraduate business administration student at a university in Indonesia. Some of his courses use English language textbooks or case studies, although his professors and fellow students usually discuss and write about them in Indonesian. Next semester a British lecturer is coming as a visiting scholar to his school, and Hendro plans to take her business course taught in English. After graduation he hopes to complete an international master's of business administration degree program in an English-speaking country and return to Indonesia to work with a multinational company. Hendro is comfortable reading in English but struggles with specialized vocabulary. He is also concerned about whether he will be able to follow the visiting professor's lectures and give presentations in her class. He plans to buy some resources to study English during the break.

- What suggestions would you give Hendro on resources to buy to help him learn vocabulary? How might you recommend he fulfill his learner role according to Nation's four-strands approach?
- As Hendro's EFL teacher, how might you structure his classes to address Nation's four strands effectively? What vocabulary would you emphasize? What principles, strategies, and assessments might you use?

Adopt Zimmerman's Word Consciousness Approach

Zimmerman (2009) argued that *word consciousness* is key in vocabulary teaching, because it is an “alertness to words” (p. 3). She suggested that features to consider include register, precision, word choices in speech and writing, collocation, and word formation. For particular courses, Zimmerman (2009) offers the following guidelines for vocabulary teaching.

First, “be selective about the words you target” in your lessons, by explaining, recycling, and practising appropriate words based on frequency, salience, learners’ goals, and the learning burden of words (Zimmerman, 2009, pp. 7–8). Teachers cannot teach every word, but they can choose those most suited to their students’ vocabulary needs. Second, “be selective about the information you present,” by pre-teaching words briefly based on the information relevant to particular activities, and notice your students’ vocabulary errors (p. 9). Third, “provide adequate repetition,” with 10 or more encounters with new words, spacing these and using various types of tasks in class for their introduction, instruction, and repetition (pp. 9–10). Fourth, offer “effective vocabulary practice” by structuring your lessons carefully (e.g., use familiar vocabulary, repeat themes, and sequence practice), using “interesting and relevant contexts,” and making them meaningful, interactive, and focused by practising functions, using teachable moments, and facilitating “student-centered group work” (pp. 11–12). Fifth, “monitor students’ understanding” and learning through regular feedback (p. 12).

I appreciate Zimmerman’s (2009) word-consciousness approach to vocabulary teaching because it is rational and realistic yet also assumes and builds on an incremental perspective on vocabulary learning (reflected in Table 2). Like Nation’s (2008) four-strands approach, Zimmerman’s word-consciousness guidelines work particularly well after getting to know students and their vocabulary needs, as discussed in Chapter 4. I often recommend my English language teaching students use Nation’s four-strands approach to frame the vocabulary component of their ESOL courses and also adapt Zimmerman’s (2009) word-consciousness guidelines in the actual pedagogy of teaching specific vocabulary in their individual lessons.

REFLECTIVE BREAK

- Think of a particular English lesson you teach. Use Zimmerman's guidelines to focus your vocabulary teaching.
- Determine which items to teach, what information to offer about each, and how to incorporate enough exposures.
- Enable students to practise this vocabulary.
- Monitor student vocabulary learning and offer feedback.

As much as possible, ESOL educators should teach their students to learn and use words and phrases in context, so they should normally use and give example sentences in both spoken and written form. As Zimmerman suggests, teachers should also actively teach the meaning of specific words, using various materials, strategies, and techniques that are appropriate to their students and contexts. One potential way to do so is to use specific themes in teaching vocabulary, using various types of readings to help English language learners develop their general, academic, and other vocabulary knowledge in relevant content areas.

Incorporate Lexical Chunks Into Vocabulary Teaching

As noted in Chapter 1, vocabulary includes lexical chunks, also called formulaic sequences, lexical phrases, or multiword units, and teachers should incorporate them into vocabulary teaching. There are different kinds of lexical chunks, including core idioms (*to pull someone's leg*), figuratives (*the apple of my eye*), and literal sequences (*high school*) (Nation, 2008). The first two cannot normally be understood just by looking at the parts of the expression alone, but literal sequences can often be comprehended by considering the meaning of the parts, especially if there is a similar equivalent in students' native languages. Zimmerman (2009) also includes phrasal verbs (*to turn on*) and notes that idioms can be more or less fixed (*to kick the bucket*) or variable (*from head to foot*, but also *from head to toe*). If you provide example sentences for students

as you introduce and teach vocabulary, then these types of lexical phrases will naturally appear quite regularly, and students will see them in context. You can highlight them by underlining them on the board and perhaps pointing out whether they are fixed or variable.

One promising aspect of research on teaching ESOL reports on lexical chunks. Shin and Nation (2008), for instance, published a list of the 100 most frequent collocations in spoken English in the British National Corpus (BNC), including *you know* (#1), *I think* (#2), and *thank you* (#8). Similarly, Martinez and Schmitt (2012) recently published a Phrasal Expressions List (PHRASE List) of “the 505 most frequent non-transparent multiword expressions in English,” based on the BNC (p. 299). Their top three are *have to*, *there is/are*, and *such as* (p. 307).

These lists may be used along with others discussed earlier. In addition, Alali and Schmitt (2012) studied teaching and learning formulaic expressions and confirmed that “at least some of the same types of teaching methodologies we use for individual words can be effective in teaching formulaic sequences” (p. 174). They argued that reviewing words and phrases is necessary because “learners need to engage with words numerous times in order to learn them” (p. 169).

REFLECTIVE BREAK

- What ways do you highlight lexical chunks or multiword units in your teaching?
- What additional methods might you use to incorporate them?

Use Corpora to Inform Vocabulary Teaching and Learning

As demonstrated in this book, much useful information, including English word frequency counts, collocation information, and important lists, is available to teachers because of research using corpora, large collections of spoken or written text. Where possible, English language teachers should use corpora to inform their teaching, choice of materials, and students’ learning. Frequency views of vocabulary

teaching require corpus-based research, and corpus evidence for vocabulary learning and teaching is more effective than intuition. Eldridge, Hancioglu, and Neufeld's (2010) article offers a straightforward overview of corpora, how to compile texts and build a corpus, and how to use vocabulary frequency analysis with one to inform teaching.

REFLECTIVE BREAK

- Visit the Compleat Lexical Tutor at <http://www.lextutor.ca/>. The “Researchers” and “Teachers” sections help instructors use various corpus tools to analyze texts and focus vocabulary teaching.

Conclusion

The task of vocabulary teaching is enormous. This chapter offered further ways to teach English words and phrases, with guidelines for teaching vocabulary in ESOL classes.

In sum, this short book has defined vocabulary and introduced its importance to language learning and teaching. It has provided a L2 perspective on understanding vocabulary and given a brief outline of research-based tips for vocabulary teaching. In addition, it has summarized how to identify your students' vocabulary knowledge and needs and to put all of the information into action using relevant vocabulary teaching guidelines. The reflection questions and tasks help you apply all this to your teaching situation, and additional resources are offered in the References section. All the best in teaching vocabulary!

REFLECTIVE BREAK

- What examples or guidelines outlined seem most useful to help you integrate vocabulary teaching into a particular course?
- What action steps should you now take to implement these?

References

- Alali, F. A., & Schmitt, N. (2012). Teaching formulaic sequences: The same as or different from teaching single words? *TESOL Journal*, *3*, 153–180. doi:10.1002/tesj.13
- Barcroft, J., Sunderman, G., & Schmitt, N. (2011). Lexis. In J. Sampson (Ed.), *The Routledge handbook of applied linguistics* (pp. 571–583). London, England: Routledge.
- Barker, D. (2007). A personalized approach to analyzing “cost” and “benefit” in vocabulary selection. *System*, *35*, 523–533. doi:10.1016/j.system.2007.09.001
- Brown, D. (2011). What aspects of vocabulary knowledge do textbooks give attention to? *Language Teaching Research*, *15*, 83–97. doi:10.1177/1362168810383345
- Coxhead, A. (2006). *Essentials of teaching academic vocabulary*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.
- Eldridge, J., Hancioglu, N., & Neufeld, S. (2010). Corpus, concordancing and teacher education. *The Teacher Trainer*, *24*(1), 7–11.
- Folse, K. (2011). Applying L2 lexical research findings in ESL teaching. *TESOL Quarterly*, *45*, 362–369. doi:10.5054/tq.2010.254529
- Leech, G., Rayson, P., & Wilson, A. (2001). *Word frequencies in written and spoken English*. Harlow, England: Longman.
- Lessard-Clouston, M. (1996). ESL vocabulary learning in a TOEFL preparation class: A case study. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, *53*, 97–119.
- Lessard-Clouston, M. (2010). Theology lectures as lexical environments: A case study of technical vocabulary use. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, *9*, 308–321. doi:10.1016/j.jeap.2010.09.001

- Lewis, M. (1993). *The lexical approach: The state of ELT and a way forward*. Hove, England: Language Teaching Publications.
- Martinez, R., & Schmitt, N. (2012). A phrasal expressions list. *Applied Linguistics*, 33, 299–320. doi:10.1093/applin/ams010
- McCrostie, J. (2007). Investigating the accuracy of teachers' word frequency intuitions. *RELC Journal*, 38, 53–66. doi:10.1177/0033688206076158
- Nation, I. S. P. (2001). *Learning vocabulary in another language*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Nation, I. S. P. (2008). *Teaching vocabulary: Strategies and techniques*. Boston, MA: Heinle.
- Nation, P., & Beglar, D. (2007). A vocabulary size test. *The Language Teacher*, 31(7), 9–13.
- Nation, P., & Meara, P. (2010). Vocabulary. In N. Schmitt (Ed.), *An introduction to applied linguistics* (2nd ed., pp. 252–267). London, England: Hodder Education.
- O'Loughlin, R. (2012). Tuning in to vocabulary frequency in coursebooks. *RELC Journal*, 43, 255–269. doi:10.1177/0033688212450640
- Schmitt, N. (2008). Instructed second language vocabulary learning. *Language Teaching Research*, 12, 329–363. doi:10.1177/1362168808089921
- Schmitt, N. (2010). *Researching vocabulary: A vocabulary research manual*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Schmitt, N., & Schmitt, D. (in press). A reassessment of frequency and vocabulary size in L2 teaching. *Language Teaching*. doi:10.1017/S0261444812000018
- Shin, D., & Nation, P. (2008). Beyond single words: The most frequent collocations in spoken English. *ELT Journal*, 62, 339–348. doi:10.1093/elt/ccm091
- Ur, P. (2012). *Vocabulary activities*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- West, M. (1953). *A general service list of English words*. London, England: Longman, Green, & Company.
- Wilkins, D. (1972). *Linguistics in language teaching*. London, England: Arnold.
- Zimmerman, C. B. (2009). *Word knowledge: A vocabulary teacher's handbook*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Zimmerman, C. B., & Schmitt, N. (2005). Lexical questions to guide the teaching and learning of words. *The CATESOL Journal*, 17, 164–170.

Also Available in the English Language Teacher Development Series

- Reflective Teaching (Thomas S. C. Farrell)
Teaching Listening (Ekaterina Nemtchinova)
Teaching Pronunciation (John Murphy)
Language Classroom Assessment (Liyong Cheng)
Cooperative Learning and Teaching (George Jacobs & Harumi Kimura)
Classroom Research for Language Teachers (Tim Stewart)
Teaching Digital Literacies (Joel Bloch)
Teaching Reading (Richard Day)
Teaching Grammar (William Crawford)
Teaching Vocabulary (Michael Lessard-Clouston)
Teaching Writing (Zuzana Tomas, Ilka Kostka, & Jennifer A. Mott-Smith)
English Language Teachers as Administrators (Dan Tannacito)
Content-Based Instruction (Margo Dellicarpini & Orlando Alonso)
Teaching English as an International Language
(Ali Fuad Selvi & Bedrettin Yazan)
Teaching Speaking (Tasha Bleistein, Melissa K. Smith, & Marilyn Lewis)



www.tesol.org/bookstore
tesolpubs@brightkey.net
Request a copy for review
Request a Distributor Policy