Vocabulary Thresholds for Reading and Writing: Targets for English Language Learners

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Tuesday January 21, 2020
TESL NB Webinar (via Zoom)
The Okanagan
Essential Question of the Day

What lexical thresholds support novice post-secondary reading and writing, and how do we get there?

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... she had ... an apt and varied vocabulary, she was never at a loss for ... the vivid phrase.

W. Somerset Maugham (1930)

Cakes and Ale
...vocabulary knowledge clearly **underpins all language proficiency** and is the foundation upon which any acquisition of syntax, pragmatics, and other aspects of language crucially depends.”

(Horst, 2013, p. 172)
Counting vocabulary
What is a word?

Word Families

- The inflected and related transparently derived forms of a word
Example of a word family

- educate
- educating
- educates
- educated
- educative
- miseducated
- educator
- educators
- uneducated
- education
- educationist
- educationists
- educational
- educationally
- educationalist
- educationalists

Results from 20K Familizer Proto v 0.5 (Cobb, 2016)
Knowing a word

Breadth vs. Depth

Passive (receptive) vs. Active (productive)

-reading -writing
How many words...

How many word families does the average university bound 18 year old grade-level student know?

18,000 Word Families

(Nation, 2001)
How many words...

How many word families do grade-level undergraduates learn at university?

+/- 5,000 word families

(Zechmeister et al, 1995)
Exploring Lexical Thresholds

With the frequency principle
Lexical frequency principle

• Certain words occur more frequently than others

• Students will encounter them more often
  • Sister vs. Sibling

• Invest time in learning vocabulary according to frequency

• Bigger return on investment for higher frequency words
A first threshold...

... 2,000 High Frequency Word Families
The first 2,000 word families

- Key threshold for learning an additional language
- Core vocabulary of a language
- Feasible learning goal with big benefits
- 80% to 85% (with proper nouns) coverage (more in oral)
- Lack of 2K creates considerable barriers

(Horst, 2013)
An excellent start ...

- 2K unlock much of the vocabulary needed for communicative language proficiency

- Lexical thresholds beyond the first 2K
Rie’s Story
Were there always these [ ] of [ ], nineteenth-century houses, their sides [ ] up with [ ] of [ ], their windows patched with [ ] and their roofs with [ ] iron, their [ ] garden walls [ ] in all directions? And the bombed sites where the [ ] dust [ ] in the air and the [ ] over the [ ] of [ ]; and the places where the bombs had cleared a larger path and there had sprung up [ ] of wooden [ ] like chicken houses? But it was no use, he could not remember: nothing remained of his childhood except a series of bright-lit [ ], occurring against no background and mostly [ ].

(Orwell, 1949/2004, pp. 9-10)
Rie’s story

- Japanese university student might know 2,000 words after 800-1,200 hours of instruction (Laufer, 2000 in Horst, 2013)

- Likely not the 2,000 most frequent word families (Horst, 2013)

- 2,000 most frequent word families ≈ 81% of 1984 excerpt
  - Frustration
  - Unable to make meaning
  - Conscious and belaboured reading
Rie’s story: “What should I do?”

Felt that my advice rang hollow:
• Avoid translating word for word
• Use this flow chart when encountering new vocabulary
• Guess the meaning from context
• Skip unimportant words (adjectives & adverbs)
• Read for gist
• Try to guess what is coming next
• Connect to your own experiences
• Use a monolingual English dictionary
• Come back to unknown words later
Started thinking...

Stages of language acquisition
Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills

Cognitively Undemanding

Cognitively Demanding

Context

Embedded

Reduced

LEXICAL BAR
(Corson, 1985; 1997)

1. Here and Now
2,000 Words

2. Lived Experience
3,000 Words

3. Scaffolded Thinking
8,000 Words

4. Educated Imagination
20,000 Words

Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency

Cognitively Undemanding

Cognitively Demanding

http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/ac/Iceberg.jpg

(Cummins 1981; Roessingh 2006; Douglas 2010; Frye 1963)
Common Underlying Proficiency

**Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills**

**Surface Features Of L1**

**Surface Features Of L2**

**Common Underlying Proficiency**

**Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency**

*Common Underlying Proficiency Model of Bilingual Proficiency (Cummins, 1981, p. 24)*
Word Tiers (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2013)

• Tier 1 Vocabulary:
  • Every day language; basic language; typically don’t require teaching; high frequency vocabulary

• Tier 2 Vocabulary:
  • Academic language that crosses disciplines; important for reading and writing; general academic words; require teaching; AWL

• Tier 3 Vocabulary:
  • Specialized academic language; low frequency vocabulary; specific to certain courses and fields; teach when needed for comprehension
Exploring Lexical Thresholds

For Post-Secondary Reading and Writing
Lexical Frequency Profiling

• Information regarding the percentage text covered by particular frequency sets of vocabulary
  (Laufer & Nation, 1995)

• Found to be
  • stable (distinguishes proficiency levels)
  • reliable (similar results for two texts by same writer)
  • valid (correlates with other measures of vocabulary)
  • valuable research and diagnostic instrument
  (Laufer & Nation, 1995)
www.lextutor.ca

(Cobb, 2016)
Lexical Frequency Profiling

www.lextutor.ca (Cobb, 2016)
BNC-COCA 1-25k Output

The output text includes statistics on word frequency and related indices. It mentions punctuation elimination, word contraction replacement, and type-token ratio calculation. The data is presented in a table format, showing frequencies, types, tokens, and cumulative token percentages across different word levels.

Related ratios and indices include:
- Pertaining to whole text:
  - Words in text (tokens): 470
  - Different words (types): 201
  - Type-token ratio: 0.43
  - Tokens per type: 2.34

- Pertaining to onlist only:
  - Tokens: 470
  - Types: 201
  - Families: 182
  - Tokens per family: 2.58
  - Types per family: 1.10

(Cobb, 2016)
the five species of pacific salmon that live in british columbia waters have fed and fascinated humans for thousands of years and have been keystones in the ecology of both coastal waters and hundreds of streams throughout much of the province their lives are part of great cycle the migration of fry or smolts from freshwater streams to the ocean the grand travels of silvery adults through the north pacific the arduous migration upstream to their birthplace the battles and lovemaking of gaudily coloured distorted bodies on the spawning grounds and the inevitable swift decay and death of the battered fish among the eggs of the generation to follow all aspects of this cycle have stirred the human imagination

although pacific salmon all share the same basic cycle different species spend different lengths of time in fresh water as juveniles and in the ocean as adult fish they spawn in different kinds of streams and at different times of the year they travel to different parts of the ocean and so on

scientists still are not sure exactly how salmon find their birthplace but they certainly use their noses fish with plugged noses cannot find their way back unique stream odours probably become imprinted on juvenile salmon as they travel downstream and they follow these as they travel back up the stream several years later as adults if this sounds amazing just recall how specific smells from your childhood can take you instantly back in your mind at least to your school yard or family kitchen

in addition salmon may be helped by the fact that they travel upstream in the company of their brothers sisters and other fellow spawners they may be able to recognize members of their own stock by specific smells released by the fish and when many fish are trying to find the same place it is far less likely that any will go astray than if they tried on their own

although most salmon find their way back home small percentage do stray into unfamiliar streams either on their own or in the company of salmon that belong in those streams straying may or may not be advantageous to individuals but small amount of it certainly aids in the survival of the species strays introduce genetic variation into breeding stocks and without them

(Canning & Canning, 2004)
throughout their travels, they use water and waters to travel and try unique ways, if you were to see them, you would notice their dedication to exploration.

BNC-2,000 types: [fams 31 : types 34 : tokens 39 ]

adults, advantageous, among aspects, battles, belong, coastal, cycle, death, disasters, fellow, generation, human, humans, ice, lengths, mountains, noses, plugged, recall, released, rivers, several, smells, stock, stocks, survival, unfamiliar, variation, yard.

BNC-3,000 types: [fams 8 : types 9 : tokens 16 ]

breeding, fascinated, try, instantly, silvery, species, stirred, stream, streams.

BNC-4,000 types: [fams 9 : types 9 : tokens 17 ]

battered, decay, distorted, inevitable, ocean, province, salmon, stray, swift.

BNC-5,000 types: [fams 1 : types 1 : tokens 2 ]

migration.

BNC-6,000 types: [fams 4 : types 5 : tokens 5 ]

eruptions, genetic, juvenile, juveniles, volcanic.

BNC-7,000 types: [fams 1 : types 1 : tokens 1 ]

astray.

BNC-8,000 types: [fams 1 : types 1 : tokens 1 ]

ecology.

BNC-9,000 types: [fams 3 : types 3 : tokens 3 ]

arduous, imprinted, odours.

BNC-10,000 types: [fams 5 : types 6 : tokens 7 ]

birthplace, downstream, freshwater, keystones, spawn, spawning.
Exploring Reading Thresholds

Post-Secondary Studies

With the frequency principle
Vocabulary, Reading, Academic Success

Strong relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension for all levels
(Stanovich, 1986; 2000, Verhoeven, 2000; Nassaji, 2003; Roessingh, 2008)

Receptive vocabulary knowledge needed for reading comprehension. Reading comprehension needed for academic success
(Nation, 2001; Coxhead & Nation, 2001; Cobb & Horst, 2001; Corson, 1997)
Considered reading demands

• Textbooks
• Online textbooks
• Academic articles
• Book chapters
• Laboratory manuals
• Online learning management systems
• E-mails
• Course catalogues
• Websites
• Newspapers
• Magazines
The Academic Word List (Coxhead, 2000)
GSL/AWL Receptive Coverage

2570 word families = 86% of an average academic text (Coxhead, 2000)
What percentage of running words ... is needed to understand a reading passage?

(Hu & Nation, 2000; Nation, 2001)
Receptive Vocabulary Thresholds

(Coxhead, 2000; Laufer & Ravenhorst-Kalovski, 2010; Nation, 2006, Schmitt, Jiang, & Grabe, 2011)
Receptive Vocabulary Thresholds

BNC-20 Word Family Frequency Bands

- Struggle Level: 2,570
- Instructional Level: 4,500

86% Coverage 95% Coverage

(Coxhead, 2000; Laufer & Ravenhorst-Kalovski, 2010; Nation, 2006; Schmitt, Jiang, & Grabe, 2011)
Receptive Vocabulary Thresholds

Receptive Vocabulary Thresholds

86% Coverage: 2,570
95% Coverage: 4,500
98% Coverage: 8,500
100% Coverage: 14,000+

(BNC-20 Word Family Frequency Bands (Coxhead, 2000; Laufer & Ravenhorst-Kalovski, 2010; Nation, 2006, Schmitt, Jiang, & Grabe, 2011))
Textbooks 4,000 to 5,000

Academic articles 8,000 to 9,000

Book chapters 14,000+

Lab manuals 95% Coverage

100% Coverage
Receptive Vocabulary Thresholds: Reading

2,000 Word Families
Encounter an unfamiliar word ≈ 1 in 4 times (76%)

2,570 Word Families
Encounter an unfamiliar word ≈ 1 in 7 times (86%)

4,000 – 5,000 Word Families
Encounter an unfamiliar word ≈ 1 in 20 times (95%)

8,000 – 9,000 Word Families
Encounter an unfamiliar word ≈ 1 in 50 times (98%)
1 in 4: Lost Level (2 K)

One two three five six seven nine ten eleven thirteen fourteen fifteen seventeen eighteen nineteen twenty-one twenty-two twenty-three twenty-five twenty-six twenty-seven twenty-nine thirty thirty-one thirty-three thirty-four thirty-five thirty-seven thirty-eight thirty-nine forty-one forty-two forty-three forty-five forty-six forty-seven forty-nine fifty fifty-one fifty-three fifty-four fifty-five fifty-seven fifty-eight fifty-nine
One two three four five six eight nine ten eleven twelve thirteen fifteen sixteen seventeen eighteen nineteen twenty twenty-two twenty-three twenty-four twenty-five twenty-six twenty-seven twenty-nine thirty thirty-one thirty-two thirty-three thirty-four thirty-six thirty-seven thirty-eight thirty-nine forty forty-one forty-three forty-four forty-five forty-six forty-seven forty-eight fifty fifty-one fifty-two fifty-three fifty-four fifty-five fifty-seven fifty-eight fifty-nine sixty
One two three four five six seven eight nine ten eleven twelve thirteen fourteen fifteen sixteen seventeen eighteen nineteen twenty-one twenty-two twenty-three twenty-four twenty-five twenty-six twenty-seven twenty-eight twenty-nine thirty thirty-one thirty-two thirty-three thirty-four thirty-five thirty-six thirty-seven thirty-eight thirty-nine forty-one forty-two forty-three forty-four forty-five forty-six forty-seven forty-eight forty-nine fifty fifty-one fifty-two fifty-three fifty-four fifty-five fifty-six fifty-seven fifty-eight fifty-nine
One two three four five six seven eight nine ten eleven twelve thirteen fourteen fifteen sixteen seventeen eighteen nineteen twenty twenty-one twenty-two twenty-three twenty-four twenty-five twenty-six twenty-seven twenty-eight twenty-nine thirty thirty-one thirty-two thirty-three thirty-four thirty-five thirty-six thirty-seven thirty-eight thirty-nine forty forty-one forty-two forty-three forty-four forty-five forty-six forty-seven forty-eight forty-nine fifty-one fifty-two fifty-three fifty-four fifty-five fifty-six fifty-seven fifty-eight fifty-nine sixty
Essay Question:
- What is the best kind of development for protecting the environment while also promoting economic growth?

Textbook excerpt
- Does it contribute to answering the question?
- Is the argument valid? Why or why not?
- You only have automatic recall for 2,000 word families.
Fenntaritable development is often kozonted with criticism today. As a result, in some countries and regions, interest has shifted to the concept of fenntaritable megelihoods, viewed as more realistic and focused. The idea of fenntaritable megelihoods emphasizes the conditions necessary to ensure that basic human needs (e.g., food, menedek) are satisfied. However, the concept has been helytecized by those who view it as merely human-centric. Critics argue that other living terimenies or alenate alkatreses of termesystems may be aldozatted or defokozatted to meet human needs.
Sustainable development is often greeted with skepticism today. As a result, in some countries and regions, interest has shifted to the concept of sustainable livelihoods, viewed as more realistic and focused. The idea of sustainable livelihoods emphasizes the conditions necessary to ensure that basic human needs (e.g., food, shelter) are satisfied. However, the concept has been criticized by those who view it as too anthropocentric. Critics argue that other living creatures or inanimate components of ecosystems may be sacrificed or degraded to meet human needs.
Implication: the more the better

The more words a reader knows, the better those words facilitate comprehension and free up cognitive space for critical engagement with the topic.

- The more words students have at their disposal, the better their engagement with a text:
  - Finding, assessing, and choosing sources
  - Reading
  - Taking notes
  - Creating connections
  - Making inferences
  - Evaluating arguments
Key Points: Novice Academic Reading

Good instructional level for content areas:

• 4,000 to 5,000 automatized receptive word families

Good independent level for content areas:

• 8,000 to 9,000 automatized receptive word families

(Coxhead, 2000; Laufer & Ravenhorst-Kalovski, 2010; Nation, 2006, Schmitt, Jiang, & Grabe, 2011)
Exploring Writing Thresholds

Post-Secondary Studies

With the frequency principle
Vocabulary, Writing, Academic Success

- Skilled use of vocabulary leads to improved generation, development, and presentation of ideas.
  
  (Raimes, 1983; Raimes, 1985; Grabe, 1985; Engber, 1995; McNamara, Crossley, & McCarthy, 2010; Smith, 2003)

- Vocabulary directly associated with the quality of a written text (Brynildssen, 2000)

- Low rated writing typically accompanied by simple vocabulary (Cobb, 2003; Hinkel, 2003)

- Students demonstrate their knowledge of matter studied through their skilled use of vocabulary in writing. Academic success is dependent on writing and the ability to use vocabulary effectively. (Nation, 2008)
Considered writing demands

• research papers synthesizing info from multiple sources
• Traditional essays
• Laboratory, business, and technical reports
• Reflective Journals
• Annotated Bibliographies
• Chapter summaries
• Website development
• Presentation scripts
• Case studies
• Brochures
• Posters
GSL/AWL Productive Output

Percentage Coverage

- Off-List: 5.61%
- AWL: 6.74%
- GSL: 94.4%

Productive Output (Douglas, 2013)
Satisfactory Productive Output Thresholds: Lexical Stretch

(BNC-20 Vocabulary Frequency Bands)

95% Output: 3,200
98% Output: 5,300
100% Output: 11,700

(Douglas, 2013)
Productive Vocabulary Thresholds: Writing

2,000 Word Families
Stop $\approx$ 1 in 8 times to search for a word (88%)

2,570 Word Families
Stop $\approx$ 1 in 17 times to search for a word (94%)

3,200 Word Families
Stop $\approx$ 1 in 20 times to search for a word (95%)

5,300 Word Families
Stop $\approx$ 1 in 50 times to search for a word (98%)
Product of Inquiry

Student Inquiry Question:

• What is a major challenge facing cities today?
Major Challenge Facing Cities Today

As a city **quickly grows** outwards, country roads become **city streets** and roads between cities become **busy** with a **big** increase in **cars**. For as the ever growing **city makes** new **neighbourhoods**, there are more people making **trips** to the city’s centre. This puts **a lot of use** on the existing road system. The **street** 22X, **in the southern end** of Calgary, is an excellent example of the **use** new **neighbourhoods** place on aging roads. Originally built as a highway south of Calgary, development quickly stretched past the old highway and there are now two new **neighbourhoods** south of it. However, **in the old days** there were very few **cars** in that **part of the city** so that only a **two way road was made**. With all the people now using 22X, it **slows down**. On several of the occasions that I have driven it, I found the **cars** to **hardly move** for a while. Now that is not the only road **busy** with **cars**; the **between city connection** of Elbow Drive and Glenmore Trail is a **bad dream** at rush hour. Clearly, **fast growth puts heavy use** on the **road systems** of a city. Finding the means to deal with increased **cars** is a **big problem** for the management of a **busy city**.
As a city rapidly expands outwards, country roads become urban streets and intercity roads become overwhelmed by the tremendous increase in traffic. For as the ever growing metropolis creates new communities, there are more people making their commute to the city’s centre. This puts a strain on the existing road system. The roadway 22X, located at the southern end of Calgary, is an excellent example of the tension new communities place on aging roads. Originally built as a highway south of Calgary, development quickly stretched past the old highway and there are now two new communities south of it. However, historically there has been very little traffic in that area so that only a two lane road was constructed. With all the people now using 22X, it grinds down to a crawl. On several of the occasions that I have driven it, I found the traffic to scarcely move for periods. Now that is not only the road swamped by automobiles; the intercity intersections of Elbow Drive and Glenmore Trail is a nightmare at rush hour. Clearly, rapid growth puts heavy strains on the roadway systems of a city. Finding the means to deal with increased traffic constitutes a major challenge to the management of a bustling metropolis.
Comparing Lexical Profiles: Apt Word Choice

BNC K8+ Ratio
(K8+Words/Total
Words)*100

>3 “good” words in a 400 word essay

<1 “good” word in a 400 word essay

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<th>NS</th>
<th>NNES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K8+ Ratio</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.29</td>
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</table>

(Douglas, 2010)
Implications

• The more words a student knows, the better those words facilitate expression and free up cognitive space for critical engagement with the topic.

• The more words students have at their disposal, the better their engagement with inquiry-based learning.
  • Produce learning products
  • Demonstrate awareness of register and genre
  • Communicate ideas with precision
  • Share new knowledge
  • Self-evaluate learning
  • Revise and edit work
Key Points: Novice Academic Writing

Good instructional level for content areas:

• **3,000 to 4,000** automatized productive word families

Good independent level for content areas:

• **5,000 to 6,000** automatized productive word families

(Douglas, 2013)
Bringing it together
Bringing it together

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word Families</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing</th>
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<tr>
<td>1,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>76%&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>88%&lt;sup&gt;4&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,570</td>
<td>86%&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>94%&lt;sup&gt;4&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>3,000</td>
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<td>95%&lt;sup&gt;4&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>4,000</td>
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<td>4,000-5,000</td>
<td>95%&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<tr>
<td>5,000</td>
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<td>98%&lt;sup&gt;4&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>6,000-7,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>8,000-9,000</td>
<td>98%&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt; &lt;sup&gt;3&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>11,000</td>
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<td>12,000</td>
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<td>100%&lt;sup&gt;4&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<tr>
<td>14,000</td>
<td>100%&lt;sup&gt;est&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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Vocabulary is one thread of many...

**Vocabulary is an underlying variable of language proficiency**

- Other things may be at play:
  - Syntax
  - Context
  - Background knowledge
  - Culture
  - Individual learner characteristics
  - Multi-word units
  - Imagery
Implications for teaching and learning

How do the proposed lexical thresholds for novice academic reading and writing connect to your own educational context?
20 Principles for Effective Vocabulary Teaching

What are some possible elements of an effective vocabulary instructional strategy or activity?
1. Effective vocabulary instruction ... 

... activates background knowledge.
2. Effective vocabulary instruction ... 

... is relevant to learners.
3. Effective vocabulary instruction ...

... is context embedded.
4. Effective vocabulary instruction ...

... promotes comprehensible input (i+1).
5. Effective vocabulary instruction ...

... maintains low affective filters.

(Krashen, 1982)
6. Effective vocabulary instruction ... 

... involves meaningful reading and listening input.
7. Effective vocabulary instruction ...

... encourages communicative writing and speaking output.
8. Effective vocabulary instruction ...

... includes multiple opportunities for interaction.
9. Effective vocabulary instruction ...

... uses multi-modal input and output.
10. Effective vocabulary instruction ...

... takes advantage of varied and interesting activities.
11. Effective vocabulary instruction ...

... is cognitively engaging.
12. Effective vocabulary instruction ...

... primes students to notice future encounters.
13. Effective vocabulary instruction ...

... uses both pre- and post- encounter teaching.
14. Effective vocabulary instruction ... ...

... develops strategies and learner autonomy.
... affords access to learner dictionaries and first language resources.
16. Effective vocabulary instruction ... 

... stimulates automaticity and fluency.
17. Effective vocabulary instruction ...

... balances inductive learning with direct and explicit instruction.
18. Effective vocabulary instruction ...

... recycles vocabulary for multiple encounters.
19. Effective vocabulary instruction ...

... spirals concepts for encounters beyond simple definitions.
20. Effective vocabulary instruction ...

... includes learner accountability.
10 Vocabulary Teaching Ideas
1. Cloze Activities

• Use vocabulary close activities to review key passages from a reading.
• One way to create a vocabulary cloze activity is to blank out target vocabulary in the reading passage, and have students work to fill in the blanks with information either from a word bank (less challenging) or from memory (more challenging).
• Vocabulary cloze activities can also be used to reinforce new vocabulary learning after a lecture, reading, or video.
• These activities have the double benefit of getting students to think about language (how words fit into the blanks) as well as content (which words fit into the blanks).
2. Dictogloss

- Give students a list of target vocabulary from a reading passage.
- Then read the passage aloud twice to students.
- The first time, students listen and take notes of the main ideas.
- The second time, students listen and add in the supporting details for the main ideas.
- Next, they work in groups to try and recreate the passage as completely as possible.
- Students should use the vocabulary provided before the activity began.
- Vocabulary Dictogloss has the benefit of getting students to think about content (what ideas they should include in their writing) and language (how they should put down those ideas and incorporate new vocabulary).
3. Frayer Models

- A Frayer Model is a diagram with four parts.
- It is used to help students uncover the core definition of a key vocabulary item.
- The vocabulary item is in the middle of the chart, with essential characteristics, examples, non-examples, and the definition in the corners.
- Students work together to complete the chart, and then develop a definition.
- Frayer models can be great warmers, reviews for a previous lesson, or closers that demonstrate learning.
- They are useful when there can be multiple interpretations of a concept’s meaning.
4. Frequency-based Previews

• Extract what you think are important vocabulary terms from an upcoming lesson and introduce them based on how frequently people use them.

• You can focus on high frequency words first that students will encounter more often.

• These words might be from a list of 2,000 high frequency word families in English (Tier 1 Words), or general academic words (Tier 2 Words) that cross disciplines (such as words in the Academic Word List).

• Next, you can focus on lower frequency words that are discipline specific and key for content understanding (such as technical terminology).

• Tools such as the vocabulary profilers on www.lextutor.ca can help you determine which words to teach based on their frequency.
5. Vocabulary Splashes

- Before a lesson, you can show students from 12 to 20 important vocabulary words that they will encounter.
- You can do this on the board or with PowerPoint, etc.
- Ask students to look over the words and work in pairs to make a list of five words they are unfamiliar with in connection to the lesson topic.
- Once each pair has five words, you can elicit five words from the class as a whole.
- Then you can explain those five words briefly before beginning the lesson.
- This will help to heighten students’ awareness of the new words they will be encountering during the lesson as well as activate their background knowledge.
6. Concept Definition Maps (Reiss, 2012)

• Students make a graphic organizer with the vocabulary target in the middle and three questions around the outside:
  • What is it?
  • What is it like?
  • What are some examples?
• Students then work together to answer the questions and complete the graphic.
• They might use their textbooks, dictionaries, and the internet to help them find the answers to their questions
7. Student Glossaries

- Have students keep their own personal glossaries of key terms and vocabulary during the course.
- Students can add terms to their glossaries during class or while they are studying.
- Students can organize their glossaries either alphabetically or by topic.
- In addition to English definitions, students might include parts of speech, pronunciation guides, synonyms, antonyms, collocations, illustrations, translations, and sample sentences.
- With personal glossaries, students become lexicographers, creating their own personal dictionaries for later reference.
- Give students regular time to work on their glossaries so they become a habit.
8. Word Walls

- Have a wall in the classroom where key vocabulary related to the course content is posted for all students to see.
- Students can add to the wall when they find a particularly useful term or word they are curious about.
- Word walls can also make a useful exit ticket from class.
- As students leave, they can put up new, challenging, or interesting words onto the word wall.
- The most common words can be gathered together for later vocabulary practice.
- If you don’t have access to a physical classroom wall, you can explore creating a virtual wall online.
9. Exit Tickets

• At the end of class, give each student an index card.
• Students write their names on the cards along with a word from that day’s lesson that they found challenging.
• As they leave, students hand in their index cards.
• The next day, redistribute the cards to different students.
• Students can look up the words on the cards, and then provide a definition, draw a picture, make a sample sentence or give a translation on the back.
• Students return the cards to the original owners.
• By the end of the semester, students have a full set of index cards they can use as flash cards to review challenging vocabulary.
10. Jig-Saws

- Jig-saw activities break a reading down into parts.
- Groups of students each read one section of a text and identify key vocabulary.
- Then they work together to solidify their understanding of that section and its key vocabulary.
- Next, the original groups break up and reform with new partners.
- Each group now contains students who have read different parts of the text.
- They tell each other about their sections of the text and explain two or three key words from their particular sections.
- Once students have an understanding of the entire text, they go back to their original groups to compare what they have learned and make note of new words.
Other Ideas?

https://cdn.pixabay.com/photo/2016/10/13/22/20/meeting-1738945_640.png
Conclusions ...

• An EAL curriculum should include a lexical scope and sequence across receptive and productive skill domains

• Realistic vocabulary goals and practical guidelines for reaching 95% to 98% coverage are an important element of the curriculum

• Focusing on automatization below the thresholds releases cognitive space to engage with textual demands and tap into common underlying proficiency
More Conclusions ...

- Total output of proficient users neither necessary nor realistic
- Avoid receptive desires for productive tasks
- Inform assessment and evaluation
- Inform materials development with suitable lexical targets and a systematic focus
### Essential Question of the Day

What lexical thresholds support novice post-secondary reading and writing, and how do we get there?

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<th>Lexical Frequency Principle</th>
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<td>Principles for Vocabulary Instruction</td>
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Thank you!

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References continued...