

Nuttall, C. (2005). *Teaching Reading Skills in a Foreign Language*. Oxford, UK: Macmillan Education.

### Chapter 5: Word attack skills

Problem: Students do not have a big enough vocabulary.

(moderate L1 readers = 50,000 words)

Too much dependence on dictionary (←slow down reading, interrupt thinking)

●Freeing students from the dictionary

→extensive reading (most effective way of improving vocabulary)

●How many words do students need to have?

5,000 words: to start independent reading

2,000 words: preparation for independent reading with carefully chosen texts

●Types of vocabulary

Active (productive) vocabulary: to know well enough to use oneself [DVK, WAT]

Receptive vocabulary: to recognize/respond to, but not being able to use confidently

Throwaway vocabulary: not worth learning→Need to learn how to ignore them

●When to ignore difficult words

Students need:

to know the purpose of reading (before reading);

to identify the words that they need to understand the meaning (while reading);

to check their comprehension (after reading)

Teachers need:

to convince students that ignoring new words is acceptable and necessary;

to have students identify the sources of difficulty and judge whether a word is worth learning or not

→Activity 5.1 (pp. 65-66) + four activities

●What makes words difficult?

1. Idioms

2. Words with several meanings: choosing the appropriate one, the familiar words used in unfamiliar ways

3. Sub-technical vocabulary: needed in most fields of study→worth attention

(e.g., average, approximate, effect, combination, determine)

4. Superordinates

5. Transfer of meaning (metaphor, similar kinds of transferred meaning)

6. Irony: a problem of pragmatics

(mismatch between the apparent meaning & the writer's underlying intention)

7. Other kinds of difficulty:

text-structuring words (for textual cohesion);

pin-down words (abstract in meaning, lexical difficulties)

### Word attack skills

I. Structural clues

A. Grammatical function (→ Activity 5.2, p. 69)

B. Morphology: study of affixes + bases (→ sample activities, p. 71)

II. Inference from context

A. Getting a rough idea of a word's meaning from the context (→ Activity 5.3, p. 72)

\*for less fluent students, conscious use of inference is invaluable

B. Making use of schemata

→ Recipes for exercises (pp. 74-75)

☆ In order to infer meaning from the context, students need to have enough clues

☆ Lexical density of the text (the proportion of new words the text contains)

\*Using a dictionary: as a tool (not as a crutch)

→ Identify which words to look up; should be as few as possible

\*A note on phonics (the study of the relationship between sounds & spellings) for EFL readers

Q: Does it help foreign language readers to identify unfamiliar words?

A: No.

“People whose first language is written with great phonic regularity many find it difficult to adjust to the irregularity of English.” [Orthographic depth: shallow or deep orthographies ]

### References

Wolter, B. (2001). Comparing the L1 and L2 mental lexicon: A depth of individual word knowledge model. *SSLA*, 23, 41-69.

●Depth of word knowledge model of the mental lexicon (p.48)

well known words	fairly well known words	moderately well known words	slightly known words
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←Paradigmatic connection→

←Syntagmatic connection→

←Phonological association→

●VKS testing instrument (p.54)

- I. I don't remember having heard this word before.
  - II. I have heard this word before, but I don't know what it means.
  - III. I have heard this word before, and I *think* it means \_\_\_\_\_. (synonym or translation)
  - IV. I *know* this word. It means \_\_\_\_\_. (synonym or translation)
  - V. I can use this word in a sentence: \_\_\_\_\_.
- (If you do this section, please do section IV.)

Wolter, B. (2006). Lexical network structures and L2 vocabulary acquisition: The role of L1 lexical/conceptual knowledge. *Applied Linguistics*, 27, 741-747.

●Paradigmatic relations & Syntagmatic relations

L2 learners tend to make more mistakes related to syntagmatic relations (i.e., collocations)

←L2 learners' lexical knowledge in their L1 can be used for learning paradigmatic relations of L2 vocabulary (just putting new labels); To learn syntagmatic relations of L2 vocabulary, it is necessary for them to reconstruct the entire conceptual network.

(Example)

Paradigmatic relation: small room → small =小さな, room =部屋 → 「小さな部屋」

Syntagmatic relation: 「狭い・広い」 + 「部屋」 (collocations in Japanese)

→ 「狭い」 = narrow → "narrow room" (incorrect collocation in English)