

Schmitt, N. Instructed Second Language Vocabulary Learning. 2008.

8-9,000 word families req. for reading

5-7,000 for oral discourse

+ several word knowledge aspects

4 vocabulary learning partners; students, teachers, materials writers and researchers

Both explicit, intentional learning component & component based around maximizing exposure and incidental learning.

4 learning strands

incremental nature of vocab learning – principled, long-term programs that rec. the richness scope of lexical knowledge to be mastered.

A. The Scope of the vocab learning challenge:

1. Vocab size

98-99%

Ss need the willingness to be active learners over a long time (333)

Native speaker intuitions are limited to differentiating between very frequent and very infrequent word

2. Depth of vocab knowledge/incremental nature of vocab learning

Form (written, spoken, word parts); meaning (form and meaning, concept and referents; associations); use (grammatical functions; collocations; constraints on use)

Lexical items need to be met many times both to consolidate form-meaning link, but also to enhance knowledge of an item

receptive/productive levels of mastery

B. Issues in vocab acquisition and pedagogy

1. Importance of word form

initial form-meaning link

Developmental sharpening = people become attuned phonemes and graphemes of their L1 and learn it easily

can cause problems in L2 (336)

Form mainly learned through exposure – must be the direct focus of activity – not just an add-on to meaning – finite capacity of mind

2. Role of L1 in L2 vocab learning

L1 lots of influence on learning and use of L2 – many errors attributable to L1 influence

Ss use bilingual dictionaries and believe translating helps them

L1 is active during L2 lexical processing even in advanced learners

Advantage of L1 in establishing initial form-meaning link – easier to recall newly learned words using L1 translations – esp for less proficient learners

3. Engagement w. vocabulary

The more engagement the better remembered

1. need: req. for ling. feature in order to carry out task

2. search: for required info (dictionary e.g.)

3. evaluation: comparison of the word or info about a word found with the context of use to decide if it's the best choice

tasks with more need, search and evaluation elements are more effective

Ss motivation and attitudes matter

Self-regulation of learning leads to more involvement with and use of strategies and thus to better mastery

p 339 different types of engagement all lead to better mastery

4. Phrasal vocab

Effectiveness of highlighting phrasal vocabulary has not yet been proven

C. Intentional learning of vocabulary

Current focus on meaning-focused learning may not be the right approach to vocab acquisition:

1. attention to overall message/attention to precise meaning of words

2. guessing from context is unreliable

3. words that can be guessed easily don't generate enough engagement to be learned

4. implicit learning req. lots of repetition (10 times in reading) – doesn't usually happen.

The main reason for focusing explicitly on vocab is that it's effective; greater and faster gains, better retention

1. Use activities that maximize learner engagement with target lexical items

(p 342)

2. maximize repeated exposures to target lexical items

(p 343) most forgetting occurs early so early recycling is particularly important

3. Consider which aspects of lexical knowledge to focus on

p 344 4 strands of vocab teaching

D. Incidental learning of Vocabulary

1. The effectiveness of incidental vocabulary learning from reading

incidental vocab learning from reading more likely to push words to a partial rather than full level of mastery

2. Number of exposures necessary to promote incidental learning from reading

8-10 reading exposures give learners a chance of acquiring initial receptive knowledge of words
Advanced learners appear to learn new words in fewer encounters than low proficiency learners

Reading does lead to vocab learning but pick-up rate is slow and productive mastery is hard to acquire from exposure. (420 novels – 2000 words)

Graded readers are better at enhancing knowledge of already met words than teaching entirely new ones. Also, since repetition is key to learning vocab, repeated exposure consolidates fragile initial learning

3. Incidental learning from listening

Low uptake rate

Better when there's a variety of speakers and voice types

Reading-while-listening is superior to reading only for vocab learning.

4. Extensive Reading

Amount of reading is essential

5. Inferencing from context

One of the most frequent and preferred strategies among learners

Not necessarily effective.

Ss often confuse unknown words for words they already know with a similar form. Higher proficiency learners more successful at guessing than low proficiency learners.(p350)

Thus, inferencing skills have to be taught.

Different approaches – general **inferencing / context clues**

6. Glossing

a way of utilizing exposure better

Glossing is useful because:

- a. more difficult texts can be read
- b. provides accurate meaning for words that might not be guessed correctly
- c. has minimal interruption to reading
- d. draws attention to words which should aid the comprehension process

Best to gloss in margin and highlight phrases in text

7. Adding explicit activities to implicit learning situations

Reading w. glosses or dictionary – better receptive knowledge than reading alone

The most effective way of reinforcing incidental learning is by having intentional learning tasks afterwards – post-reading tasks focusing on target words

Not as time affective as translation + memorization

Post-tasks also improve gains from listening.

But if not followed-up on the advantage will be lost.

E. Summarizing the research

1. provide opportunity for incidental learning of vocab
 2. Diagnose which words learners need (among 3000 most frequent)
 3. Provide Opp for intentional learning of vocab
 4. Provide opp. for elaborating word knowledge
 5. Provide opp. for developing fluency
 6. Experiment w. guessing from context
 7. Examine different types of dictionaries and teach Ss how to use them
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- a. set high vocab targets
 - b. long, gradual process – different approaches may be required
 - c. intentional learning best to establish initial form-meaning link. Use L1.
 - d. after establishing initial meaning-form link –repeated exposure is required
 - e. important to enhance different aspects of word knowledge. Different word forms may be best learned explicitly, while for instance collocation may be best learned by repeated exposure in varied contexts.
 - e. maximize Ss engagement with lexical items