**Vocabulary Teaching and Assessment**

1. **Noticing and Encoding Words**

The Oxford Dictionary contains some 350,000 words, of which a minimum of 5,000 words are needed for independent learning (Browne, 2010). On average, a five-year old in L1 knows between 4,000 to 5,000 word families or “head words,” including inflections, and a university graduate, about 25,000 words. Unfortunately, many words taught to Japanese high school students (while suitable for writing entrance exams) are not often high frequency words. Therefore, vocabulary instruction at university should focus on teaching high frequency academic vocabulary words that will be of most use to students.

[Averil Coxhead](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/lals/staff/averil-coxhead.aspx) developed and evaluated The Academic Word List (AWL) of 570 words for her MA thesis at the University of Wellington, New Zealand. This list, a very useful resource for English for Academic Purposes teachers and learners, contains 570 word families which were selected from a corpus of 3.5 million words from the academic disciplines of commerce, law, science, and the arts. The words account for some 10% of academic English, but only 1.4% of the language found in novels. The list does not include words that are in the most frequent 2000 words of English (ie. the top five words, “the, be, of, and, a”) because the AWL was designed to help students for tertiary level study. For detail on the development and evaluation of the AWL, see Coxhead, Averil (2000) A New Academic Word List. TESOL Quarterly, 34(2): 213-238.

1. **Vocabulary development**
2. Select vocabulary for instruction (consult the Academic Word List and your texts).
3. Preview the text with your students, highlighting the words in their contexts on visual aid such as the OHC.
4. Use the actual object, a board diagram, prefix/affix (**ex**tricate, **ex**trinsic, **ex**tensive; educate; education; educable etc.), or a simple mnemonic to explain a word (*memory + harmonica*).
5. Circulate a list of these words to your students (a sentence context will make them much easier to recall; *collocations* are words that are used together such as “strong coffee”) and regularly review them, and quiz the students on them.
6. Use these words in classroom activities and assignments (recycle them in a variety of tasks). Check off each word when you use it in class. Try to expose the students to the word seven or eight times over the semester.
7. Guide students in collecting words and owning them (vocabulary notebooks, personal wordlists, blogs, etc.).

1. **Classroom and homework activities**
2. *Clustering*, making associations

►Students group words into logical categories (air pollution, water pollution, etc.), or

structural categories (nouns, verbs, adjectives).

1. *Comparisons*

►Prepare a list of synonyms that students know. And ask them to find corresponding words in

the text that carry the same meaning. Alternately, the students could look for contrasting

words and meanings.

1. *Idea Completions*

Instead of the traditional approach “Write a sentence using this new word…” that can result in less-than-helpful formulations (ie. “I saw a ‘virtuoso’ yesterday”), provide students with sentence stems that require them to provide a context for the word:

**The audience asked the virtuoso to play another piece of music…**

1. *Have You Ever…?*

Ask each student to “Describe a time when you might ‘urge’ someone, ‘commend’ someone, ‘banter’ with someone…”

1. *Applause, applause!*

Ask students to clap in order to indicate how much they would like to be described by the target adjectives (ie. frank, impish, stern, vain). And, as always, ask them to explain “why” they would feel that way.

1. *Variations*

You can easily vary these three activities by altering the questions or the tenses in your questions (and also remind your students of the use of the tenses as well): “How might you…?” “When might you…?” “What could you have done…?”

1. *Skimming and Peer Tutorial*

►Students skim the passage to find unfamiliar words then ask another student for help.

1. *Student Flashcards*

►A traditional but effective means of vocabulary learning and review.

1. *Feeling*

►Get the students to infer word meanings from the mood of a text; then write their own

definitions of the words and share them with their peers.

1. *Vocabulary Mime*

►Choose different vocabulary words from the text, and put them into a box. Have students

(or one student from each group) come to the front of the class to pick a word, then mime

the word for the other students to guess. Points could be given each round.

1. *Retelling*

►In pairs, students take turns summarizing a text to one another using a list of key vocabulary.

1. **Assessing Vocabulary**
2. **Notebooks, Blogs, and flashcards**

These form a record of student efforts to learn new vocabulary and should be marked.

1. **Matching 30-item quizzes**

Give students a random list of words and they match each word with its definition.

1. **Modified Cloze tests**

Students find the missing words in a text.

1. **T/F Tests of the words in sentence contexts**

A vocabulary word is provided in a sentence context.

1. **Vocabulary Depth Test**

Students choose words from a list that are related to each other.

1. **A Definition Completion**

Students have to finish a definition.

1. **A Sensitive Multiple-Choice Test**

The question is carefully worded for “the best meaning.”

1. **A Translation Test**

Students find Japanese equivalents for a word.

1. **A Self-evaluation Checklist**

Students are asked to rate their own knowledge of a word.

**Some References:**

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