



15th
ANGLO
CONGRESS

VOCABULARY

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ANGLO
CELEBRATING 85 YEARS



Cambridge Assessment
English

Authorised Platinum Exam Centre

Definition

Not just 'words'

Also:

lexical chunks (*of course, by and large, give up*)

proper nouns (countries, languages, days of the week...)

abbreviations (UN, etc., AIDS, asap)

Sheer importance

- For language proficiency in general
- Reading comprehension in particular
- More important than grammar or pronunciation
- You can understand / make yourself understood with very basic grammar ...
- You can't manage without vocabulary.

Statistics 1

How much % of the words in a text do you need to understand in order to be sure of understanding the gist?

95-98%

Statistics 2

How many lexical items do you need to know in order to be fairly sure of understanding an unsimplified text?

Probably about 8000

Statistics 3

How many lexical items do you need to know in order to be fairly sure of understanding informal spoken discourse?

Probably about 5000-6000

Statistics 4

About how many times do you need to review a new item in order to remember it permanently?

Probably between six and sixteen

'Picking up' vs focused teaching

In a teaching context like Uruguay...

... you can't usually rely on students 'picking up' new vocabulary from listening or reading

More statistics

The majority of unknown words cannot be guessed from context.

Through incidental encounter through reading, students probably learn about one new word per 1000 read ...

If they read 2000 words a week, would take them 20 years to get up to 2000.

Conclusion

We need to devote classroom time to
vocabulary expansion and review

How much?

My recommendation:

A quarter to a third of lesson time, but
combined with other aspects

Selection

Elementary / intermediate students need to acquire a lot of vocabulary as fast as possible

So

Important to select most common, important items to teach first

Hence: selection from texts

Corpus studies

Frequency lists based on corpora will provide us with a basis for selection

(plus other criteria: relevance, interest, easiness etc.)

To recap

- Vocabulary includes both single words and multi-word item
- It is VERY important
- Students need to acquire a large number vocabulary items
- We need to teach it in lessons, not rely on students 'picking up'
- We need to provide opportunities for multiple review
- We need to select the most important items to teach



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THANK YOU!