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To the Teacher

Overview

We know that learners need to have a very large vocabulary in order to be able to function in an English environment. Recent research has shown that learners must know as many as 6,000–7,000 word families to be able to understand spoken discourse in a wide variety of contexts. Furthermore, learners also need to know around 8,000–9,000 word families in order to read a range of authentic texts (e.g. novels and newspapers) (Nation, 2006). Of course, learners can cope to some extent with smaller vocabularies than these, but then unknown words will be a recurring problem.

These figures may seem daunting, but even so, they do not fully reflect the learning that students must do. Each word family includes several individual word forms, including the root form (*reflect*), its inflections (*reflected*, *reflecting*, *reflects*), and regular derivations (*reflection*, *reflective*). Nation (2006) shows that the most frequent 1,000 word families average about six members (types per family), decreasing to about three members per family at the 9,000 frequency level. According to his calculations, a vocabulary of 6,000 word families (enabling listening) entails knowing 28,015 individual word forms, while the 8,000 families (enabling wide reading) entails 34,660 words (Schmitt, 2008). However, it cannot be assumed that knowing one word family member implies knowing (or being able to guess) related members. Schmitt and Zimmerman's (2002) advanced learners of English typically knew only some, but not all, of the noun / verb / adjective / adverb members of word families they studied.

The upshot is that learners must learn a very large number of words to be successful English users. Unfortunately, learners typically fall well short of the size requirements reported here. Laufer (2000) surveyed a number of international teaching contexts and found that some university students knew around 4,000 word families (after 1,800–2,400 hours of instruction). However, the majority of learners she surveyed only knew between 1,000 and 2,000 word families. These learners did know some or all of the most frequent word families in English (often considered the most frequent 2,000) but had woefully inadequate vocabulary sizes compared to the requirements outlined here.

What are teachers to do about this typical deficiency in vocabulary size? Clearly, the long-term goal of 6,000–7,000 or 8,000–9,000 words requires extended study, but in the short term, it makes sense to work towards a more achievable interim objective. For learners who have most of the high-frequency, first 2,000 families in place, the obvious target is the next frequency band, that is, 3,000–4,000.

Focus on Vocabulary 1: Bridging Vocabulary focuses on just this vocabulary. This vocabulary can be considered “bridging vocabulary” as it exists between high-frequency vocabulary (which mainly expresses basic everyday concepts) and the less frequent, extensive vocabulary, which allows the expression of precise, nuanced, and stylistically appropriate communication. After your students have mastered this bridging vocabulary, they should be able to talk about a wider range of topics and use English with more precision. This should put them on the threshold of using English for more academic or formal purposes if they wish. As such, we see this book as a very good foundation for the more academic vocabulary and style found in *Focus on Vocabulary 2: Mastering the Academic Word List*.

In this book, we explicitly teach 504 word families from the 3,000–4,000 frequency band, although the majority of them are from the easier 3,000 band. It would have been possible to include more words in this book, but there is

always a compromise between teaching many words in a cursory fashion and teaching fewer words in greater depth. The words in the 3,000–4,000 band are still relatively high frequency vocabulary, and so need to be learned well. Also, it must be remembered that we are teaching *word families*, and so the number of individual words taught will number in the thousands. In order to help students gain a reasonable mastery of these words, we have drawn on the latest vocabulary research to design the most beneficial exercises. The key rationale behind the pedagogy in this book can be summarized in the following points.

- Words must be encountered numerous times to be learned. Nation (1990) reviewed the literature and concluded that it takes from five to sixteen or more repetitions for a word to be learned. In every chapter of *Focus on Vocabulary 1*, each target word appears at least four times, and most appear many more times elsewhere in the book. The Strategy Practice chapters and Unit Tests provide additional recycling opportunities.
- Learning a word entails more than knowing its meaning, spelling, and pronunciation (Schmitt, 2000). In fact, there are a number of other types of word knowledge, including a word's collocations, grammatical characteristics, register, frequency, and associations. In order to use a word with confidence, a learner must have some mastery of all of these types of word knowledge. Some can be taught explicitly (for example, meaning and spelling), while others can only be truly acquired through numerous exposures to a word (for example, frequency and register information). Our extensive recycling can help learners gain intuitions about types of word knowledge that are best learned in context. We have provided exposures to the target vocabulary in both reading passages and in a number of exercise sentences, which model as many different contexts as possible. At the same time, our exercises focus on elements that can be explicitly taught. Every chapter focuses on meaning, the derivative forms of a word (word families), and collocation.
- Students learn best when their attention is focused on the material to be learned (Schmidt, 1990). To make the target words more noticeable, we have placed them in **bold** type in the chapters in which they are the target words. However, to avoid excess clutter, recycled target vocabulary is not boldfaced in subsequent chapters.
- Learners typically do not know all of the members of a word family, even if they know some of these word forms (Schmitt and Zimmerman, 2002). However, a learner must know the correct form of a word (noun, verb, adjective, adverb) for a particular context. Thus, every chapter has a section (Word Families) that deals with the derivative forms of the target words.
- Equally important for the natural use of words is collocation. These word partnerships are actually difficult to teach, but we feel that collocation is so important to the appropriate use of vocabulary that we have included a collocation section in each chapter (Collocation). The exercises explicitly teach a number of collocations for the target words. However, as it is impossible to teach all of the collocations for a word, the tasks are best seen as exercises that help make learners more aware of collocations in general and may help students build their collocation intuitions for individual words more rapidly.
- In order to ensure that the information in this book reflects the actual usage of the target words, we have researched a number of corpora, including the 263 million-word New Longman Corpus. This has allowed us to empirically determine how the target words behave in real contexts. This was particularly useful in identifying the collocations of the words, because intuitions are often unreliable in this area. In addition, the examples and sentence exercises in this

book are informed by the patterns and constructions found in the corpus, and so are authentic in nature.

Organization of the Book

The book is divided into seven units, with each unit focusing on a specific subject. Within each unit, there are four chapters—three main chapters plus a Strategy Practice chapter that presents additional information and chances to recycle the target vocabulary.

MAIN CHAPTERS

Each of the three main chapters is organized as follows.

Getting Started provides warm-up questions about the chapter topic. The questions' main purpose is to activate students' prior knowledge about the topic before they read the passage. The questions also usually ask about the students' life or ideas, and so can be used as a more general discussion starter as well.

Assessing Your Vocabulary Knowledge: Target Words presents twenty-four target words and asks students to assess their knowledge of each word both before and after they work through the chapter (Revisiting the Target Words). The assessment test is taken from Schmitt and Zimmerman (2002) and views vocabulary learning as incremental. Thus, even if students do not achieve productive mastery of every word by the time the chapter is finished, the test can show partial improvement (for example, from *no knowledge* to *receptive knowledge*). By avoiding a *no knowledge / full mastery* dichotomy, the test can show smaller degrees of learning. We would expect every student to learn enough about the target words to show some improvement on this test, which should maintain and enhance their motivation.

Reading presents a reading passage that has been graded in difficulty to be suitable for the level of student learning the 3,000–4,000 frequency band of vocabulary. The embedding of the target vocabulary in these texts ensures that it is not introduced in isolation, but in meaningful contexts. There is also a great deal of target vocabulary in these texts that is not specifically focused on in the chapter, and that provides natural recycling in new contexts of words students have already studied.

In addition, the passages are suitable for a wide range of reading-based tasks if you so desire. This integration of reading and vocabulary allows the study of lexis in programs that have a reading focus, and promotes the beneficial concurrent improvement of reading and vocabulary skills. For example, at the end of each passage, we include six questions (Reading Comprehension) that focus on comprehension ranging from literal details to opinions about the issues raised by the text. We also provide the word counts for each main passage to allow you to use the passages for timed-reading purposes. Timed reading of already familiar passages gives students practice in developing fluent reading skills.

Focusing on Vocabulary features the following sections.

- **Word Meaning** features a variety of exercises designed to help students learn the meaning of each of the twenty-four target words. Some of the tasks are deductive in nature, and some are inductive, catering to a range of learning styles.

- **Word Families** provides practice in recognizing and using the various derivative word forms that make up a word's family (*behave, behavior, behavioral*).
- **Collocation** exercises are designed to improve students' intuitions about the collocations a word takes (*human behavior, behavior modification*).

Expanding the Topic provides various reading, discussion, and writing activities that recycle the target words and expand students' word knowledge in new ways.

STRATEGY PRACTICE

The fourth chapter in each unit is a Strategy Practice chapter that gives students another chance to engage with many of the word families they have studied in the unit while at the same time developing vocabulary learning strategies. Each Strategy Practice chapter begins with a Getting Started section and ends with a Focusing on Vocabulary Cards section. The Strategy Practice chapters deal with a variety of topics. For example, in Chapter 4, dictionary use is discussed. In Chapter 8, the focus is on essay writing. The remaining Strategy Practice chapters (12, 16, 20, 24, 28) also have a Learning More about Words section as well as a reading skills section. The Strategy Practice chapters are thus a combination of recycling, focusing on word knowledge types, and developing strategies.

Answer Key and Unit Tests

Focus on Vocabulary 1 is accompanied by an online Student Book Answer Key and Unit Tests. The tests give students additional vocabulary practice and assess their word knowledge.

Focus on Vocabulary 1 draws on our vocabulary research and many years of experience teaching vocabulary. We hope that you enjoy using it in your classes and that it helps your students learn the type of vocabulary they need to use English in more competent ways. Good luck!

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To the Student

Why Study “Bridging” Vocabulary?

We assume you know the most common words in English. Many of these frequent words are taught in schools and occur regularly in reading materials, so you have probably seen them often. However, they mainly refer to common, everyday topics, and you will probably have trouble finding the right word if you want to talk about other things. The words you will study in *Focus on Vocabulary 1* are beyond this basic vocabulary, at the next level. When you learn the vocabulary at this higher level, you will be able to discuss a much wider range of topics and use English words much more precisely. You can think of the vocabulary at this level as forming a “bridge” between the basic vocabulary you already know and the large vocabulary you would eventually like to learn. Bridging vocabulary is also an important step towards using vocabulary in academic situations, in case you want to continue your education in English.

Knowing a Word

In order to use words effectively in your oral and written work, you must know more than simple word meanings. You must expand your knowledge of a word so that you know which meaning fits a particular context. You must learn which word form to use (for example, a noun or a verb) in a specific sentence. In addition, you must learn how to combine words with other words to form commonly used collocations. Many elements of word knowledge are required in order to choose the best word for a particular situation. Some of these elements of word knowledge include the following.

- **Word Meaning:** Many words in English have more than one meaning. You must be careful to use the right meaning for the right context.
- **Word Families:** Most words are part of a “family” of words with a shared meaning. You need to know how the different family members (for example, noun form, adjective form) are spelled and pronounced.
- **Collocation:** Some words appear together frequently. They are “word partners,” or collocations. Knowing these word partners can help you sound more natural.
- **Synonyms:** Synonyms have a similar meaning, but there are often some contexts where one synonym is more appropriate than another one.
- **Frequency:** The frequency of a word can make a difference in how it is used. Generally, higher frequency words are more basic and are used in everyday situations, while lower frequency words are usually restricted to specific situations and tend to be more formal.

Vocabulary Learning Strategies

Focus on Vocabulary 1 will help you learn “bridging vocabulary” words. However, to learn them well, you will need to continue meeting and learning these word families outside of this book. This means you will need to use vocabulary strategies to maximize your learning. Below, we describe a number of these vocabulary learning strategies. Complete the activities to see how the strategies can help you learn the words better.

USING A DICTIONARY

One of the most important reasons to use a dictionary is to discover a word’s meaning. However, many words have more than one meaning, and you must be careful to choose the one that matches the context.

Below are three meanings of the word **bolt** from the *Longman Dictionary of American English*. Match the meaning to the following three contexts.

- | | |
|----------------------------|---|
| _____ 1. weather | a. a screw with a flat head and no point, for fastening things together |
| _____ 2. being in a hurry | b. lightning that appears as a white line in the sky:
a bolt of lightning |
| _____ 3. mechanical things | c. to run away suddenly |

GUESSING FROM CONTEXT

Guessing the meaning of a new word from context is a very good way to supplement the learning of vocabulary from a book like this. You can get clues from the surrounding words and the construction of the sentences.

Try this example, which has the target word **mood**.

Have you ever been in such a bad **mood** that nothing made you feel happy? Even hearing your favorite song or seeing your best friend would not cheer you up. Negative feelings like this are normal occasionally, but if they last for a long time, friends may begin to consider you moody and might even start avoiding you altogether.

1. What is the meaning of **mood**?
2. What are the clues that helped you discover this meaning?
3. Did you notice the word **moody** and guess that it is part of the same word family? How could this help you understand the meaning of **mood**?

EXTENSIVE READING

Although you gain a lot of benefits from studying words, you also need to see or hear them in many contexts to understand how to use them appropriately. One of the best ways to gain this wide exposure is to read extensively. The repeated exposure to words in reading will help you remember their spellings and meanings, and will also show the other words they commonly occur with. In other words, by reading widely, you will eventually begin to get a feel for which words collocate with the words you are learning.

Look at the ten examples of **habit** in these sentences. Do you notice any collocation patterns?

1. When dieting, you need to develop sensible eating **habits** and continue to exercise.
2. She had an annoying **habit** of tapping her fingers on the table.
3. John ran his fingers through his hair, a nervous **habit** he had never been able to break.
4. His most annoying **habit** was how he always dominated a conversation.
5. Understand your eating **habits**, and you will be one step closer to changing them.
6. The coach finally was able to cure the player's nervous **habit** of rubbing the ball.
7. Many people find smoking an annoying **habit**.
8. Many Americans have poor eating **habits**, consuming far too many calories per day.
9. Her husband had many annoying **habits**, but she loved him just the same.
10. His nervous **habit** of licking his lips disturbed the others in the meeting.

THESAURUS PLUS DICTIONARY

If you want to expand your vocabulary and use the best word for a particular context, then a thesaurus can help you discover new synonyms. However, you need to confirm with a dictionary that a new synonym is appropriate for the particular context. Most thesauruses will list *elderly*, **ancient**, and *faded* as synonyms of the word *old*. They have similar meanings, but they are not exactly the same.

Check your dictionary and write the word that best fits each sentence.

ancient	elderly	faded	old
---------	---------	-------	-----

1. Sadly, the _____ man was losing his memory and no longer recognized his friends.
2. The _____ curtain no longer contained the bright colors it had when it was new.
3. She threw her _____ desk out in the garbage.
4. The bones they discovered belonged to _____ dinosaurs that used to live in their area.

USING INTERNET TOOLS

Nowadays, there are many Internet sites that can help your learning. One of the best ones for discovering information about words is the *Lextutor* website (<http://www.lex tutor.ca>). One of the things it can show is how frequent words are. *Lextutor* gives frequency information in 1,000-word bands. For example, “1,000” means that the word occurs in the 1,000 most frequent words in English, and “3,000” means that the word occurs in the band between the 2,001 and 3,000 most frequent words. Frequent words can be used in many situations, as they are not restricted to particular contexts. Less frequent words are likely to be used mainly in particular situations, so you must be careful to only use them in these contexts. For example, *old* occurs about 474 times per million words of English and has many uses. On the other hand, *decrepid* occurs only about once per million words. This is because it is mainly used to describe buildings and machinery that are so old that they are falling apart and no longer of any value.

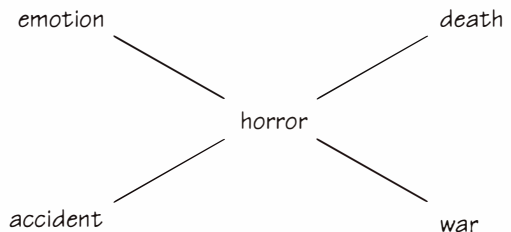
See if you have a feeling for how frequent the following synonyms are. Rank them from **1** (most frequent) to **4** (least frequent). Then go to the *Lextutor* website and click on the “Vocabprofile” and then the “BNC-20” links to take you to the frequency page. Check and see how frequent the words are.

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| 1. _____ essential | 2. _____ excellent |
| _____ imperative | _____ exquisite |
| _____ necessary | _____ magnificent |
| _____ vital | _____ superb |

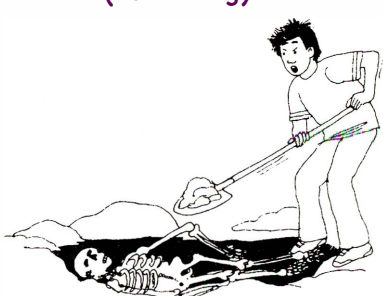
VOCABULARY CARDS—A KEY LEARNING STRATEGY

Focus on Vocabulary 1 will teach you many strategies for learning vocabulary words. Using vocabulary cards is one such strategy. Look at the example of a vocabulary card below. This card was created by a Japanese student who wanted to understand and remember the word *horror*. Study the card and read the directions for creating vocabulary cards of your own.

(Front of card)

<p>Part of speech and pronunciation</p> <p>horror (n) 'hɒrə</p>	<p>Word map</p>  <pre> graph TD emotion --- horror death --- horror accident --- horror war --- horror </pre>
<p>Word family</p> <p>-id (adj.) -ibly (adv.) -ify (v.)</p>	<p>Collocations</p> <p>horror movie horror struck inspire horror</p>

(Back of card)

<p>First language translation of horror</p> <p>きょうふ (in Hiragana)</p> <p>恐怖 (in Kanji)</p>	<p>Keyword illustration (horu = dig)</p> 
<p>Second language definition</p> <p>intense fear, dread</p>	<p>Example sentence</p> <p>The family watched in horror as their house burned.</p>

How to Create and Use Vocabulary Cards

To make your own vocabulary cards for the words in this book, follow these steps.

1. Write the English word in the top left corner of the front of the card. Then write the word's meaning in the top left corner of the back of the card. Include anything that tells the meaning, for example, first language translations or English definitions. With this information, you can start using the card to learn the word. The card on page xiii is for a Japanese student learning the English word *horror*; therefore, it has two Japanese translations, one in Hiragana spelling and one in Kanji spelling.
2. When you review the card, add new information to it in the different sections. This will make you think more deeply about the word and will expand your word knowledge. Include the following kinds of information on your card:
 - an example sentence for the word
 - notes on how to form the other members of the word family
 - a word map with related words
 - a list of collocations
 - any other information you find interesting or important
3. Consider adding a memory picture to the card. This is called the keyword technique. In the sample card, the student drew a picture of someone digging up a skeleton because the English word *horror* sounds like the Japanese word *horu* (meaning “dig”), and a skeleton evokes horror.
4. Keep filling out the different sections until you know the word well. For some words, you may need to complete all of the sections. For other words, you may need less information.
5. Keep your cards in a box or folder. Take some cards out and study them often. They are portable, so you can even take them with you and study them on the way to and from school or work. As you learn a word better, move its card toward the back of your box so you will not study it as often. Put cards for new words toward the front, where you will see them more often.
6. Remember to review each word numerous times. Repetition builds your memory of a word. Even after you “know” a word, go back and review it occasionally to make sure you do not forget it. If you do not review, you will lose all of the benefits of your previous study!

As you study the target words in this book, try making vocabulary cards to help you remember the words. Studying with vocabulary cards will enrich the learning process and add to the knowledge gained by doing the exercises in the book.

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