

BUILDING VOCABULARY

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“While without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed.”

David Arthur Wilkins

“Words are important. If you cannot say what you mean, you will never mean what you say. And you should always mean what you say.”

George Bernard Shaw

1. Words in Numbers

- English language has above a million words.
- 2000 words are enough to understand English.
- Only 2,500 words make up about 80 % of everything we hear or write.
- An average educated speaker has a vocabulary of about 20,000 words, but he or she uses far fewer.
- An average native English speaker uses around 2000 words.
- Shakespeare used around 30,000 words in his writing.

2. Origins of English Vocabulary

- a) Over half of all English words come from Latin (school).
- b) 12 % of words originally come from Greek (theatre).
- c) Many words also come from:
 - ✓ French : Education
 - ✓ Chinese: Typhoon (a tropical storm)
 - ✓ Finnish: Sauna (a room used as a steam bath)
 - ✓ Gujarati (Indian state of Gujarat): bungalow
 - ✓ Turkish: Kiosk
 - ✓ Arabic: Sugar (سكر)

3. What is Vocabulary?

- Vocabulary refers to all the words known and used by a particular person, or all the words used in a particular subject or language. (we cannot say ‘a vocabulary’)
- Knowing a word, however, is not as simple as merely being able to recognise or use it.
- Vocabulary usually develops with age, and serves as a useful and fundamental tool for communication and acquiring knowledge.
- Vocabulary is the glue that holds stories, ideas, and content together, making comprehension accessible for one and all.

4. Benefits of Learning New Words

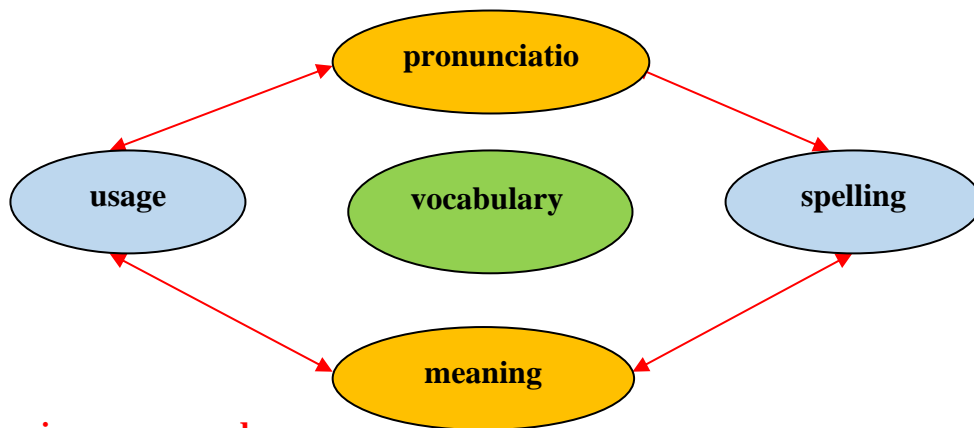
- The more words you know, the better you can express yourself (communication).
- Ability to interpret the world
- Become a better writer
- Achieve better academic career
- More success at work
- Become a better public speaker
- Gain the respect of people

5. Types of vocabulary



- ❖ **Reading** vocabulary is all the words a person can recognise when reading. This is generally the largest type of vocabulary simply because a person tends to be exposed to more words by reading than by listening.
- ❖ **Listening** vocabulary is all the words a person can recognise when listening to speech. People may still understand words they were not exposed to before using cues such as tone, gestures, the topic of discussion and the social context of the conversation.
- ❖ **Speaking** vocabulary is all the words a person uses in speech. It is likely to be a subset of the listening vocabulary.
- ❖ **Writing** vocabulary is all the words used in various forms of writing from formal essays to Twitter feeds. Many written words do not commonly appear in speech.

6. Structure of Vocabulary



7. Aspects of knowing a new word

- ✚ Understanding its meaning
- ✚ Knowing how to put it into a sentence
- ✚ Knowing when to use it (style and register)
- ✚ Knowing if it is formal or informal (slang, taboo)
- ✚ Knowing if it is common or unusual
- ✚ Being able to spell it
- ✚ Recognising it when you hear it said
- ✚ Being able to pronounce it (use CD-ROM)

8. Strategies for Vocabulary Learning

a. Choosing a dictionary

- Two types: specialist or general language dictionaries
- A general language dictionary can be: monolingual or bilingual
- A monolingual dictionary forces you to think in English, so you are improving your English even as you study
- Electronic (cd-roms) and online dictionaries
- Thesaurus: lists of words that have similar meanings. (The most famous one in Britain is Roget's thesaurus)

b. Learn through Context

- learn new words by reading them in texts and by trying to understand them from the contexts in which they occur.
- read texts that reflect your interest
- after you meet a new word, be ready to recognise examples of it in other texts (more exposure)

c. Plan your Vocabulary Learning

- How many words do you intend to learn each day?
- Where are you going to learn them?
- Which material are you going to read?
- How often are you going to revise them?

d. Identify Word Parts

- **Roots:** knowing some of the most commonly used roots gives you access to many words at once. For example, the word root cogn- means to know (recognise)
- **Prefixes:** the word part placed at the beginning of a word. For example, review (re = again) + (view)
- **Suffixes:** the word part placed at the end of a word. For example, economic (economy + ic)

e. Synonyms and Antonyms

- **A synonym:** a word which is similar or the same meaning
 - **An antonym:** a word which means the opposite
- your previous knowledge of words helps you know the structure of newly learnt words and their use.
- Thesaurus can be a good help

f. Homophones and Homographs

- ❑ Homophones are two or more words that sound alike but spelled differently and have different meanings: their, there, and they're / to, too, two.
- ❑ Homographs are words which are spelled alike but have two different meanings: close, close

g. Context Clues

- use context clues to help you determine the meaning of an unknown word from context: definition, mood, inference, example, experience...
- context clues expose you to more linguistic input

h. Learning Aids

- Word association: words associated through meaning are learnt together
- Pictures (human body) and diagrams (word tree)
- Tables
- Matrices
- Word class (verbs, nouns / using different colours)
- Semantic (word) maps
- Cards: word on one side/ meaning on other side
- Tech tools: podcasts, audiolibrary, anki (flash cards)

i. Vocabulary Notebook and Revision

- Have a notebook for recording all your newly learnt words
- Organise your notebook in a way that facilitates access and revision
- Carry your notebook wherever you go
- Frequent exposure to words helps memorise them
- Use spaced learning to revisit and consolidate your new vocabulary

j. Making the new words active

- Use the words you learnt in meaningful sentences
- Try to write sentences that relate to your life and needs
- Make a point of using the new words in your next class or homework or exam
- Watch out for your new words in your general reading
- Write a paragraph or story using and linking the words you learnt together

9. Extra info

- ✓ The shortest and most commonly used word is “I.”
- ✓ The longest word refers to a type of lung disease:
Pneumonoultramicroscopicsilicovolcanoconiosis. (25 letters)
- ✓ Swims will be swims even when turned upside down.
- ✓ A pangram sentence is one that contains every letter in the language: “The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.”
- ✓ The shortest complete sentence is “I am.”
- ✓ Crutch words are unnecessary words that we use to fill the dead spaces while speaking such as: well, you know, obviously, so, and actually.