

**Introduction to  
L2 Vocabulary Acquisition  
& Learning:  
Lecture 12**

Yukio Tono  
Fall 2015

**10 Key Issues**

---

1. Vocabulary is an important component of language use.

- Without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed.

David Wilkins (1972:111)

---

**10 Key issues**

---

- What [the DIALANG analysis] would appear to show is that the size of one's vocabulary is relevant to one's performance on any language test, in other words, that language ability is to quite a large extent a function of vocabulary size.

Charles Alderson (2005:88)

---

**10 Key Issues**

---

2. A large vocabulary is required for language use.

---

**10 Key issues**

---

- The best conservative rule of thumb that we have is that up to a vocabulary size of around 20,000 word families, we should expect that [English] native speakers will add roughly 1,000 word families a year to their vocabulary size. This means that a [L1] five year old beginning school will have a vocabulary of around 4,000 to 5,000 word families. A university graduate will have a vocabulary of around 20,000 word families. These figures are very rough and there is likely to be a large variation between individuals. These figures exclude proper names, compound words, abbreviations, and foreign words.

Paul Nation and Rob Waring (1997:7-8)

---

**10 Key Issues**

---

3. Formulaic language is as important as individual words.

Wray (2002) suggests that the development of good collocation intuitions comes down to how language is learned. Natives appear to learn formulaic language throughout the language acquisition process, while nonnatives focus more on individual words than sequences because they are more manageable and give a feeling of control over the language.

---

### 10 Key Issues

---

4. Corpus analysis is an important research tool.

Corpus linguistics provides an extremely powerful tool for the analysis of natural language and can provide tremendous insights as to how language use varies in different situations, such as spoken versus written, or formal interactions versus casual conversation.

Randi Reppen & Lita Simpson (2002:92)

---

### 10 Key Issues

---

5. Vocabulary knowledge is a rich and complex construct.

---

### 10 Key Issues

---

The first [type of vocabulary knowledge] may be called 'breadth' of knowledge, by which mean the number of words for which the person knows at least some of the significant aspects of meaning ... [There] is a second dimension of vocabulary knowledge, namely the quality or 'depth' of understanding. We shall assume that, for most purposes, a person has a sufficiently deep understanding of a word if it conveys to him or her all of the distinctions that would be understood by an ordinary adult under normal circumstances.

Anderson and Freebody (1981: 92-93)

---

### 10 Key Issues

---

... learners need to have more than just a superficial understanding of the meaning [of a word]; they should develop a rich and specific meaning representation as well as knowledge of the word's format features, syntactic functioning, collocational possibilities, register characteristics, and so on.

John Read (2004: 155)

---

### 10 Key Issues

---

6. Vocabulary learning is incremental in nature.

There is a need to develop instruments which are more sensitive to degrees of acquisition and to both receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge.

Newton (1995: 171)

---

### 10 Key Issues

---

7. Vocabulary attrition and long-term retention

... even though access to lexical knowledge is lost, attriters may retain a substantial advantage in regaining that knowledge, in comparison with others who are learning the same words for the first time.

Hansen, Umeda & McKinney (2002:669)

---

### 10 Key Issues

---

8. Vocabulary form is important.

Inefficient orthographic processing can lead not only to inaccurate lexical retrieval, but to poor [reading] comprehension as well.

Koda (1997:35)

---

### 10 Key Issues

---

9. Recognizing the importance of the L1 in vocabulary studies

The mother tongue can influence the way second-language vocabulary is learnt, the way it is recalled for use, and the way learners compensate for lack of knowledge by attempting to construct complex lexical items.

Michael Swan (1997: 179)

---

### 10 Key Issues

---

10. Engagement is a critical factor in vocabulary acquisition.

In essence, anything that leads to more and better engagement should improve vocabulary learning, and thus promoting engagement is the most fundamental task for teachers and materials writers, and indeed, learners themselves.

Nobert Schmitt (2008: 339-340)

---