Chapter 5: Word attack skills

Problem: Students do not have a big enough vocabulary.

(moderate L1 readers = 50,000 words)

Too much dependence on dictionary (slow down reading, interrupt thinking)

● Freeing students from the dictionary
  ➔ extensive reading (most effective way of improving vocabulary)

● How many words do students need to have?
  5,000 words: to start independent reading
  2,000 words: preparation for independent reading with carefully chosen texts

● Types of vocabulary
  Active (productive) vocabulary: to know well enough to use oneself [DVK, WAT]
  Receptive vocabulary: to recognize/respond to, but not being able to use confidently
  Throwaway vocabulary: not worth learning ➔ Need to learn how to ignore them

● When to ignore difficult words
  Students need:
  to know the purpose of reading (before reading);
  to identify the words that they need to understand the meaning (while reading);
  to check their comprehension (after reading)

  Teachers need:
  to convince students that ignoring new words is acceptable and necessary;
  to have students identify the sources of difficulty and judge whether a word is worth learning or not
  ➔ Activity 5.1 (pp. 65-66) + four activities

● What makes words difficult?
  1. Idioms
  2. Words with several meanings: choosing the appropriate one, the familiar words used in unfamiliar ways
  3. Sub-technical vocabulary: needed in most fields of study ➔ worth attention
     (e.g., average, approximate, effect, combination, determine)
  4. Superordinates
  5. Transfer of meaning (metaphor, similar kinds of transferred meaning)
6. Irony: a problem of pragmatics
   (mismatch between the apparent meaning & the writer’s underlying intention)

7. Other kinds of difficulty:
   text-structuring words (for textual cohesion);
   pin-down words (abstract in meaning, lexical difficulties)

**Word attack skills**

I. Structural clues
   A. Grammatical function (Activity 5.2, p. 69)
   B. Morphology: study of affixes + bases (sample activities, p. 71)

II. Inference from context
   A. Getting a rough idea of a word’s meaning from the context (Activity 5.3, p. 72)
      *for less fluent students, conscious use of inference is invaluable
   B. Making use of schemata

   ➔ Recipes for exercises (pp. 74-75)
   ☆ In order to infer meaning from the context, students need to have enough clues
   ☆ Lexical density of the text (the proportion of new words the text contains)

   *Using a dictionary: as a tool (not as a crutch)
   ➔ Identify which words to look up: should be as few as possible

*A note on phonics (the study of the relationship between sounds & spellings) for EFL readers
   Q: Does it help foreign language readers to identify unfamiliar words?
   A: No.

“People whose first language is written with great phonic regularity many find it difficult to adjust to the irregularity of English.” [Orthographic depth: shallow or deep orthographies]
References

- Depth of word knowledge model of the mental lexicon (p.48)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>well known words</th>
<th>fairly well known words</th>
<th>moderately well known words</th>
<th>slightly known words</th>
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↔ Paradigmatic connection ➜
↔ Syntagmatic connection ➜
↔ Phonological association ➜

- VKS testing instrument (p.54)
I. I don’t remember having heard this word before.
II. I have heard this word before, but I don’t know what it means.
III. I have heard this word before, and I *think* it means ___________. (synonym or translation)
IV. I *know* this word. It means _______. (synonym or translation)
V. I can use this word in a sentence: _______________________.
   (If you do this section, please do section IV.)


- Paradigmatic relations & Syntagmatic relations
L2 learners tend to make more mistakes related to syntagmatic relations (i.e., collocations).

↔ L2 learners’ lexical knowledge in their L1 can be used for learning paradigmatic relations of L2 vocabulary (just putting new labels): To learn syntagmatic relations of L2 vocabulary, it is necessary for them to reconstruct the entire conceptual network.

(Example)
Paradigmatic relation: small room ➔ small =小さな, room =部屋 ➔ 「小さな部屋」
Syntagmatic relation: 「狭い・広い」+「部屋」(collocations in Japanese)
   ➔ 「狭い」=narrow ➔ ”narrow room”(incorrect collocation in English)