SOME RESOURCES IN VOCABULARY ASSESSMENT

PRE-WEBINAR VIEWING
To view a 16-minute video presentation by John Read on Vocabulary Assessment, go to the Language Testing Resources website:

www.languagetesting.info/video/main.html#cinema

Click on Video 10. Vocabulary to start the presentation.

DEFINING A “WORD”

In vocabulary studies we need to be clear about what we mean by a word for the purposes of analysis. In the context of assessing learners’ vocabulary knowledge, it can make quite a difference to our estimates of how many words they know.

Word form
This is a neutral term to refer to different ways in which a word can be written (or spoken). Thus, wrong, wrong, WRONG, wrongs and wrongly are different forms of the word “wrong”

Lemma
A lemma is the base form of word, together with its inflected forms.
Noun: dog, dogs, dog’s, dogs’
Verb: walk, walks, walked, walking; swim, swims, swam, swum, swimming
Adjective: tall, taller, tallest

Word family
A headword, together with its inflected and derived forms which share the same core meaning
govern
governs, governing, governed; governor(s), government(s), governance, governmental, governable, ungovernable

bright
bright / brighter / brightest; brightly; brightness; brighten / brightens / brightened /brightening
TYPES OF VOCABULARY

The vocabulary of a language is characterized by a relatively small number of high-frequency words, plus a large number of words that occur infrequently. (See Nation, 2013, Chap. 1; Schmitt & Schmitt, forthcoming). Here is a broad classification for English:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency Range</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3,000 - 9,000</td>
<td>High-frequency vocabulary</td>
<td>The 2000-3000 most frequent word families. The first priority in vocabulary learning because these words account for 80% or more of the running words in any written or spoken text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4,000 - 9,000</td>
<td>Mid-frequency vocabulary</td>
<td>Word families in the 4000-9000 frequency range. Learners need to know these words in order to be able to understand authentic, unsimplified writing and speech.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 9,000</td>
<td>Low-frequency vocabulary</td>
<td>All the rest of the word families. Which of these words are known (or are worth learning) depends on the learner’s personal interests; educational background or current studies; area of employment; social, cultural, and natural environment; and so on.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Academic vocabulary:** Word families which occur much more frequently in academic texts (textbooks, lectures, handouts, journal articles, reference manuals, seminar presentations) than in non-academic usage, across a range of different disciplines.

**Technical vocabulary:** Low-frequency word families which are used in a particular discipline, profession, sport, culture, or other special field. They are normally known (well) only by people with an interest or expertise in the relevant area.
SELECTED REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

Books and articles
Websites

Tom Cobb’s Compleat Lexical Tutor:  www.lextutor.ca.

Paul Nation’s home page: www.victoria.ac.nz/lals/about/staff/paul-nation.

Norbert Schmitt’s site: http://www.norbertschmitt.co.uk/resources.html

Word Frequency Lists

General vocabulary

www.wordfrequency.info  Lists based on Mark Davies’ Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), plus lists for Spanish and Portuguese
http://conc.lextutor.ca/list_learn/  Word lists for English and French, including Paul Nation’s 20,000 word families derived from the British National Corpus
http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Wiktionary:Frequency_lists  Word lists for 44 languages from various sources, particularly frequency counts of texts on the web

High-frequency vocabulary in English

General Service List: http://jbaumann.com/gsl.html  A version of the classic list, originally published in 1953

New General Service List: www.newgeneralservicelist.org/  A new list, based on the Cambridge English Corpus

Academic vocabulary in English

Academic Word List: www.victoria.ac.nz/lals/resources/academicwordlist/  Averil Coxhead’s influential list, based on her own corpus of academic English
Academic Vocabulary List: http://www.academicvocabulary.info/  Gardner and Davies’ new list, derived from the Corpus of Contemporary American English

Lists of multi-word lexical units (lexical phrases, formulaic expressions) in English


Online Vocabulary Tests

http://www.lextutor.ca/tests/
Here you can find versions of the Vocabulary Levels Test, the Vocabulary Size Test, Yes/No vocabulary tests for English and French, and a word associates test

Vocabulary Size Test:  www.vocabularysize.com One form of Paul Nation’s test of vocabulary size

X_Lex and Y_Lex size tests:  www.lognostics.co.uk/tools
X_Lex assesses words in the 1000-5000 word frequency range for English, French, Spanish, Portuguese and Swedish. Y_Lex covers the 6000-10,000 range for English only.

Guessing from Context Test and Word Part Levels Test:  http://ysasaojp.info/testen.html
Developed by Yosuke Sasao at Victoria University of Wellington, NZ as a doctoral project

The Test of English Derivatives (TED):
www.norbertschmitt.co.uk/uploads/test-of-english-derivatives.doc
Norbert Schmitt and Cheryl Boyd Zimmerman’s test of knowledge of derived members of word families