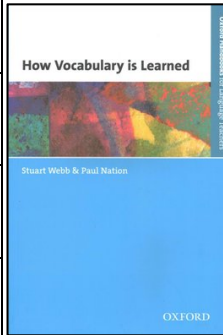


## How Vocabulary is Learned

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How Vocabulary is Learned		
<b>Author:</b>	Stuart Webb & Paul Nation (2017)	
<b>Publisher:</b>	Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press	
<b>Pages</b>	<b>ISBN</b>	<b>Price</b>
Pp. xiii+322	978-0-19-440355-9	\$22.35 U.S.



*How Vocabulary is Learned*, published in the series of *Oxford Handbooks for Language Teachers*, is a comprehensive book on both theoretical and practical issues involved in second language vocabulary teaching and learning. The book consists of an introduction and ten chapters, extensively covering topics such as the significance of vocabulary learning, vocabulary size and growth, resources for vocabulary learning, and vocabulary teaching techniques and theoretical underpinnings. Each chapter includes a section called “Keys to Activities,” in which the authors provide beneficial activities and discussion questions to assist with comprehension of the chapter. The book also includes four appendices (Essential Word List, Vocabulary Levels Test, 25 Useful Word Stems, Word Part Levels Test), a companion website with links to documents (including the Essential Word List and the Vocabulary Levels Test), and a glossary of terms.

The book can be broken into three main parts. The first part (Chapters 1-2) sheds light on issues that affect vocabulary learning (e.g., frequency and vocabulary selection criteria). The second part (Chapters 3, 4, and 5) includes detailed information about vocabulary and the techniques to develop language skills (i.e. reading, listening, writing, and speaking). The last part (Chapters 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10) presents the practical aspect (e.g., strategies and techniques) of vocabulary teaching and learning.

Chapter 1, “Which Words should be Learned?” provides the theoretical contents on vocabulary teaching and learning. In addition, the chapter addresses the issue of frequency and vocabulary learning by covering frequency lists, vocabulary selection, and the use of corpora in language teaching. In Chapter 2, “Learning Burden,” the book analyses the learning burden of words (i.e., words that present a special difficulty to the learner) from the perspectives of form-meaning connections, word forms (sounds and spelling), collocations, receptive versus productive use, and presentation versus interference. The chapter also discusses the amount of effort required to learn

a specific word and introduces antonyms, synonyms, and members of lexical sets as a solution to overcome the learning burden.

In Chapter 3, “Vocabulary Size and Growth,” Webb and Nation shed light on the issues of lexical development of form, meaning, and use. This chapter also touches on the differences between vocabulary acquisition in first and second languages, as well as incidental and deliberate vocabulary learning. The authors contribute to the discussion on incidental and deliberate vocabulary learning by arguing that the former should be supported by the latter in foreign language learning contexts. Then, Chapter 4, “Conditions Contributing to Vocabulary Learning,” focuses on some of the conditions that help enhance vocabulary learning. Discussions on repetition, the quality of noticing, and the effects of errors on vocabulary learning are provided. “Analysing Vocabulary Learning Activities” (Chapter 5) discusses a range of important and popular vocabulary learning activities (e.g., extensive listening, task-focused spoken interaction, extensive reading, speed-reading, interactive reading, reading with text highlighting, keyword technique, and dictation), that incorporate the four language skills. The chapter not only lists thought-provoking and intriguing vocabulary learning activities, but also explains the pedagogical rationale for each activity.

Chapter 6, “Learning Vocabulary in Different Contexts,” serves to provide details about vocabulary teaching in different contexts to learners of different levels. For instance, it includes a comparison of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English as Second Language (ESL) contexts, teaching English to young learners, teaching vocabulary in small and large classes, and teaching to learners of different proficiency levels. It is shown that the amount of spoken input provided and the number of opportunities learners have to use the target language differ in EFL and ESL contexts and ultimately impacts vocabulary growth. Chapter 7, “Developing Autonomous Learners of Vocabulary,” probes into the development of autonomy in vocabulary learning and covers vocabulary learning strategies. This chapter provides both general principles and key strategies for autonomous vocabulary learning (e.g., guessing from context, using dictionaries effectively, and using flashcards). “Developing an Effective Vocabulary Learning Programme” (Chapter 8) introduces a programme that is based on four strands: meaning-focused input, meaning-focused output, language-focused learning, and fluency development. The aim of Chapter 9, “Resources for Vocabulary Learning,” is to provide teachers and learners with vocabulary teaching and learning activities with carefully designed guidelines. The chapter includes vocabulary learning resources such as vocabulary level and size tests, word lists, flashcards, and corpora. Chapter 10, “Key Questions about Vocabulary Learning,” focuses on 12 central questions that are frequently asked by teachers about vocabulary learning. This last chapter, which answers these questions asked in the “Introduction” section, recapitulates main insights of the whole book.

This book serves as an all-in-one resource on vocabulary learning for both practitioners and researchers. Webb and Nation present evidence-based findings, recommendations, and practice in an accessible manner, making the book useful for language learners, teachers, and researchers. The book has concrete suggestions on how to maximize the effectiveness of using vocabulary teaching and learning techniques for individual students or with a cohort of learners. The book, with its carefully suggested and elaborately explained activities, has the power to enhance learners’ vocabulary knowledge. Moreover, the book elaborates on the theory-practice relationship of vocabulary learning and teaching.

While the authors provide a useful resource on vocabulary teaching and learning, no attempt is made to delve into the integration of technology and vocabulary learning. *How Vocabulary is Learned* could be improved by emphasizing the effectiveness of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) and mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) for vocabulary learning. Although the book includes some of the well-known technological tools to teach and learn

vocabulary, it does not provide a detailed guideline of technology use in vocabulary learning. However, there are numerous vocabulary learning applications and studies that utilize CALL (e.g., online games, multimedia glosses, virtual environments and computer-mediated communication) and MALL (e.g. mobile instant messaging tools and smartphone applications) to teach and learn vocabulary. An additional chapter on “Emerging Technologies and Vocabulary Teaching” would be useful. Despite this limitation, this book will be an important resource for teachers and researchers with its evidenced-based recommendations for classroom practice.

## References

Webb, S., & Nation, P. (2017). *How vocabulary is learned*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.

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