

Focused vocabulary acquisition and essay writing

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Although vocabulary has been acknowledged as an important part of ESL, it is been treated as an afterthought, especially in the writing class. The assumption has been that after students attain an intermediate level of speaking, listening and reading skills, they will be able to “pick up” vocabulary as they continue to navigate the often turbulent waters of writing in a second language. However, recent work in vocabulary acquisition (or lack of it) has forced teachers to look at vocabulary acquisition with new eyes (Hinkel, Lewis 2000, Nation).

SELECTION

- Student-selected items
- Teacher-selected
 - AWL verbs (e.g., claim, demonstrate, state, suggest)
 - Transitions (e.g., despite (the fact that), in spite of (the fact that))
- Task-specific items – Vocabulary from the readings

CLARIFICATION AND ELABORATION

- Definitions
 - Class –constructed
 - Dictionary
 - Persona/First language
- Web Diagrams
 - Collocations (i.e., using both dictionaries and an online web concordancer*)
 - Synonyms
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(* I use www.nottingham.ac.uk/%7Ealzsh3/acvocab/wordlits.htm)

EXPOSURE

- Looking for target vocabulary in readings
- Paraphrasing sentences

USE

➤ Role Plays

- Writing group paragraphs - on a topic connected to the upcoming essay assignment or essay exam
- Writing Individual paragraphs - on a topic connected to the upcoming essay assignment or essay exam

References

Conzett, J. (2000). Integrating collocation into a reading and writing course. In M. Lewis (Ed.), *Teaching Collocation. Further Development in the Lexical Approach* (pp. 70-87). London: Language Teaching Publications

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Lewis, M. (2000). There is nothing as practical as a good theory. In M. Lewis (Ed.), *Teaching Collocation. Further Development in the Lexical Approach* (pp. 10-27). London: Language Teaching Publications

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Woodard, G. (2000). Collocation – encouraging learner independence. In M. Lewis (Ed.), *Teaching Collocation. Further Development in the Lexical Approach* (pp. 28-46). London: Language Teaching Publications