The What and How of Vocabulary Teaching and Learning

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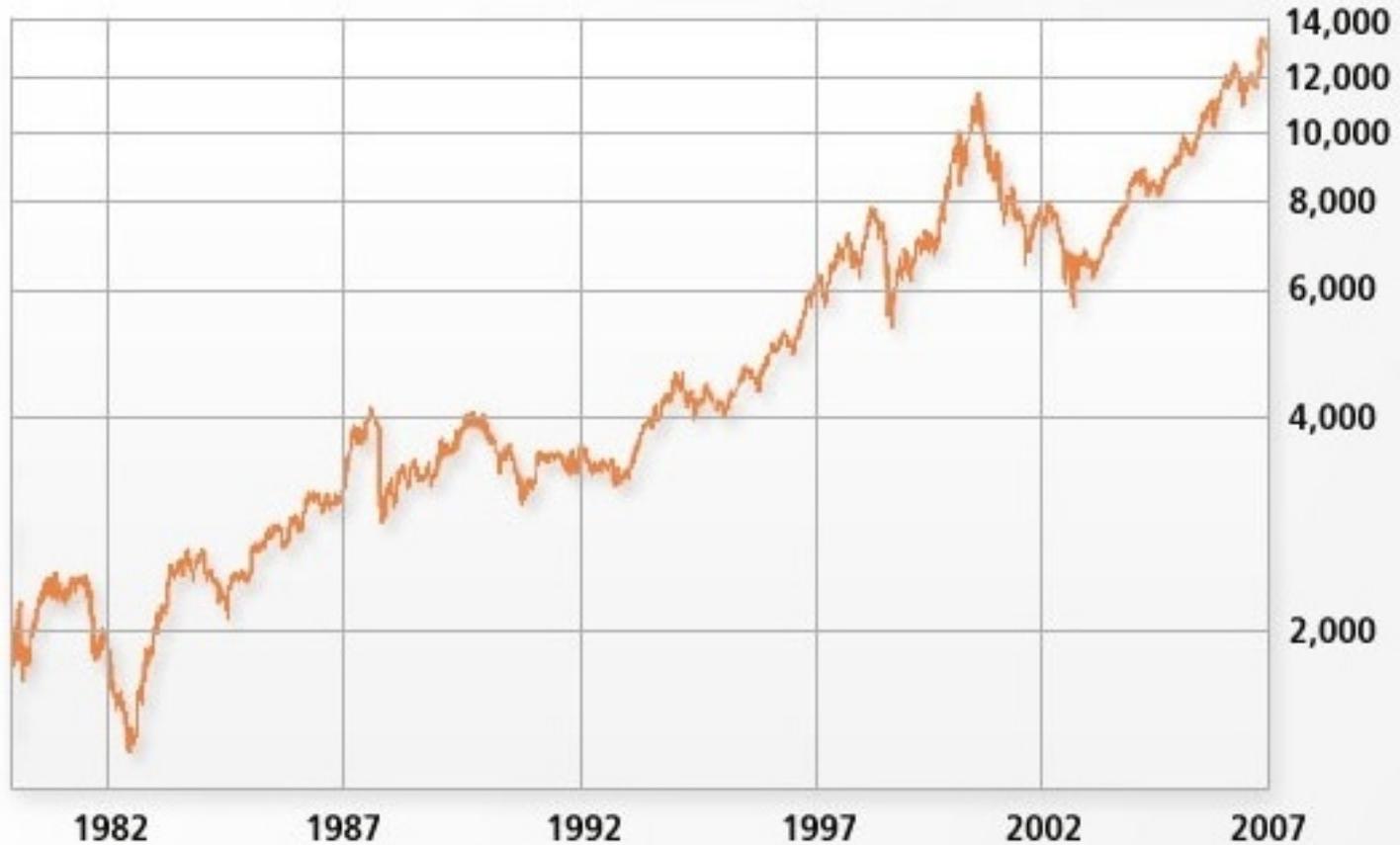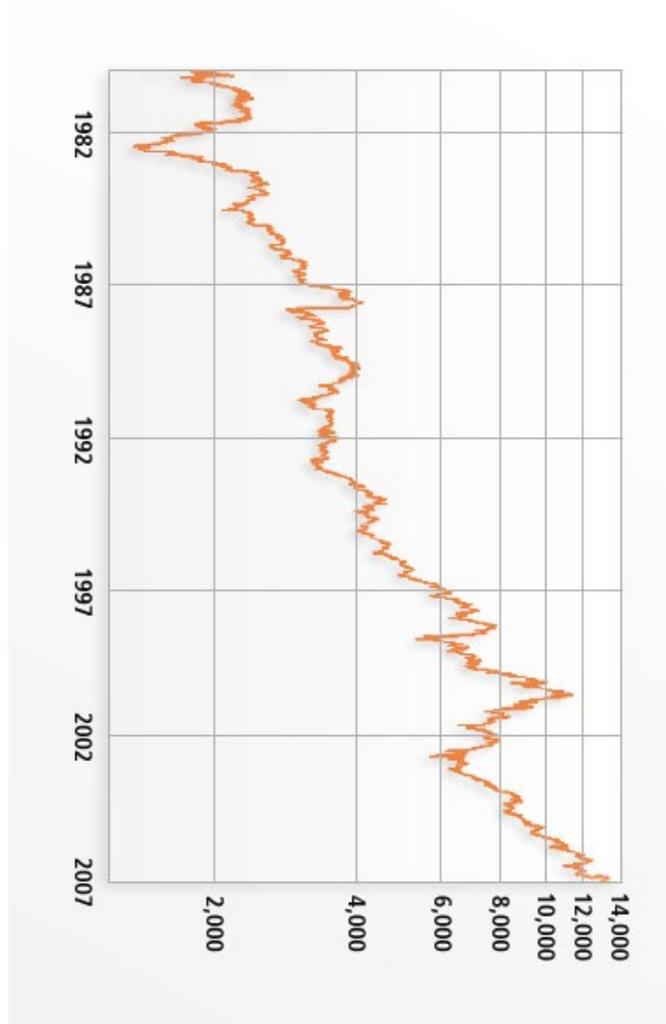
Word are exactly like stocks…

…but different

Similarities

- Learning them is an investment of time (and time is money)
- Different words have different rates of return

A digression

A digression

A digression

Word are exactly like stocks…

…only different

Similarities

- Learning them is an investment of time (and time is money)
- Different words have different rates of return
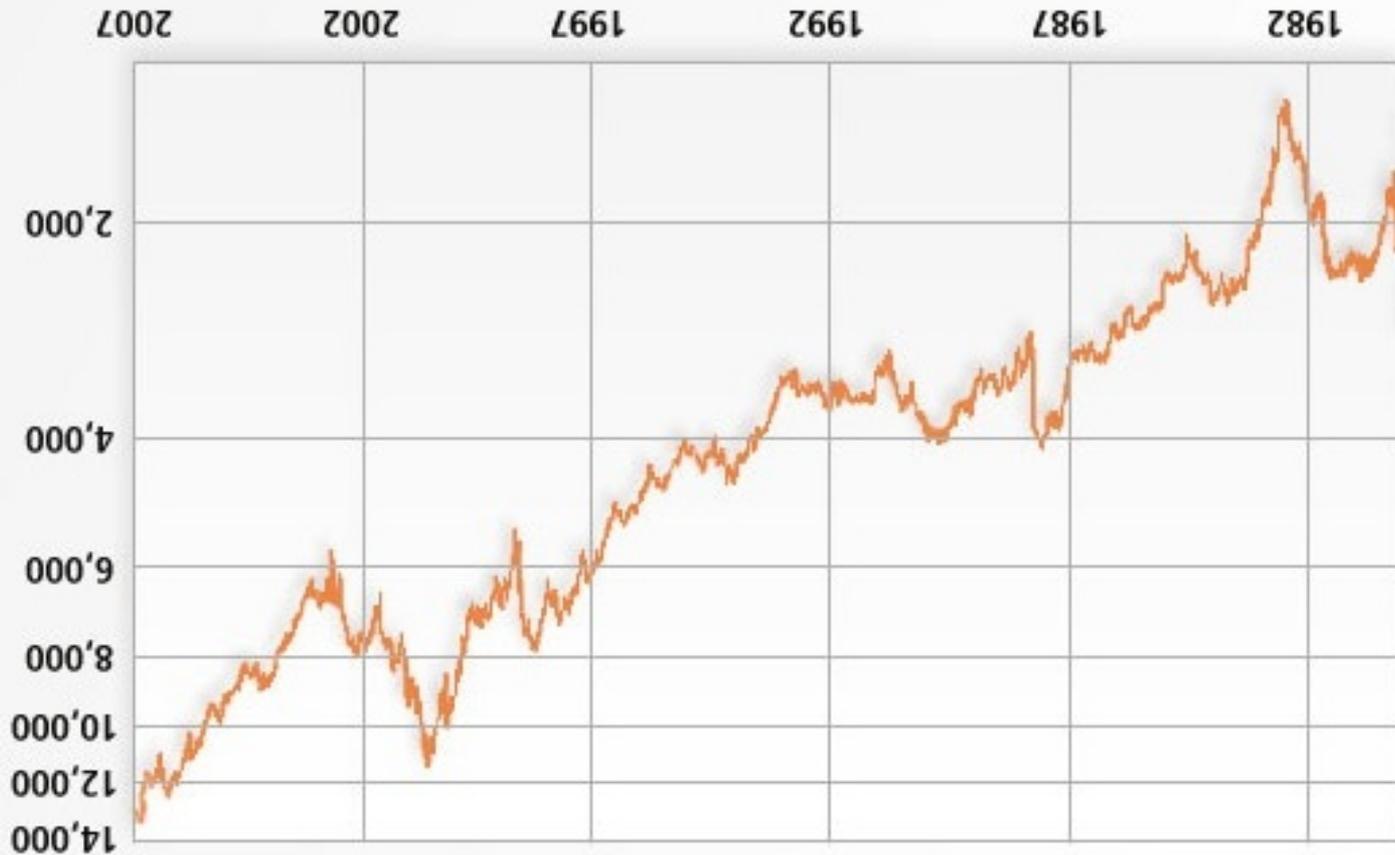
The Quiz

Rank the following in order of learning priority, assuming your student knows none of them:

1. *thus*
2. *expect*
3. *distant*
4. *realm*
5. *pencil*
6. *filibuster* (it shows up in a reading you're doing)
7. *only + handful* (collocation)
8. *hit the jackpot* (idiom)

HUMBER

The Quiz

Rank the following in order of learning priority, assuming your student knows none of them:

		Frequency per million words
1.	*thus*	93.17 (493.46 / 49.25)
2.	*expect*	220.48
3.	*distant*	25.89
4.	*realm*	13.36
5.	*pencil*	11.27
6.	*filibuster*	6.11
7.	*only + handful* (collocation)	3.67
8.	*hit the jackpot* (idiom)	0.43

Overview

Vocabulary
- What's a word?
- Goals of vocabulary learning (selecting vocabulary)
- Knowing a word
- Guessing vocabulary
- Studying vocabulary (and technology)
- Teaching & explaining

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What's a word?

Word senses

Tokens

Types

Lemmas

Families

What's a word?

Word senses

- The various meanings a word has
  - *run* = 1. move (animals), 2. function (machines), 3. flow (water)
- Begin by teaching most common sense of a word
- Good dictionaries *LDOCE, Oxford Learner's*, etc.
- Most common sense is usually overwhelmingly so
- Don't teach other senses until the basic sense is well established

Tokens

Types

Lemmas

Families

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What's a word?

Word senses

Tokens

- any instance of a word
  - *Vocabulary helps us and puzzles us.*

Types

Lemmas

Families

What's a word?

Word senses

Tokens

- any instance of a word
  - *Vocabulary helps us and puzzles us.* (6 tokens)

Types

Lemmas

Families

What's a word?

Word senses

Tokens

Types

- all identically spelled words are one type

    - *Vocabulary helps us and puzzles us.*

Lemmas

Families

What's a word?

Word senses

Tokens

Types

- all identically spelled words are one type

  - *Vocabulary helps us and puzzles us.* (6 tokens & 5 types)

Lemmas

Families

HUMBER

What's a word?

Word senses

Tokens

Types

Lemmas

- all regularly inflected words sharing a stem and belonging to the same category
  - [verb: *jump, jumps, jumped, jumping*]   [noun: *jump, jumps*] [noun: *jumper, jumpers*]

Families

HUMBER

What's a word?

Word senses

Tokens

Types

Lemmas

- all regularly inflected words sharing a stem and belonging to the same category
    - [verb: *jump, jumps, jumped, jumping*] [noun: *jump, jumps*] [noun: *jumper, jumpers*] (3 lemmas, 6 types, 8 tokens)

Families

What's a word?

Word senses

Tokens

Types

Lemmas

Families

- all regularly inflected and derived words sharing a stem
    - [*jump, jumps, jumped, jumping, jumper, jumpers*]
      [*do, doing, undo, redo, doable*]

HUMBER

What's a word?

Word senses

Tokens

Types

Lemmas

Families

- all regularly inflected and derived words sharing a stem
  - [*jump, jumps, jumped, jumping, jumper, jumpers*]
    [*do, doing, undo, redo, doable*]
    (2 families, 7 lemmas, 11 types, 11 tokens)

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What's a word?

Families

run

Lemmas

run (verb)   run (noun)   runner

Types

run   running   ran   runs

Senses

(of a person or animal) go quickly using your legs   (of a machine) function

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Goals of vocabulary learning

How much do learners need to know

– How many words are there in English

– How many words do native speakers know

– High frequency vocabulary

– Academic vocabulary

– Low frequency vocabulary

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Goals of vocabulary learning

How much do learners need to know
- – The more the better
- – At least 95% of the tokens in a study text
- – About 99% of the tokens in a pleasure reading text

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POP QUIZ

Word senses

Tokens

Types

Lemmas

Families

Goals of vocabulary learning

How much do learners need to know
- How many words are there in English
  - It depends on what a word is
  - OED has about half a million entries
  - About 114,000 word families (Webster's)
- How many words do native speakers know
- High frequency vocabulary
- Academic vocabulary
- Low frequency vocabulary

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Goals of vocabulary learning
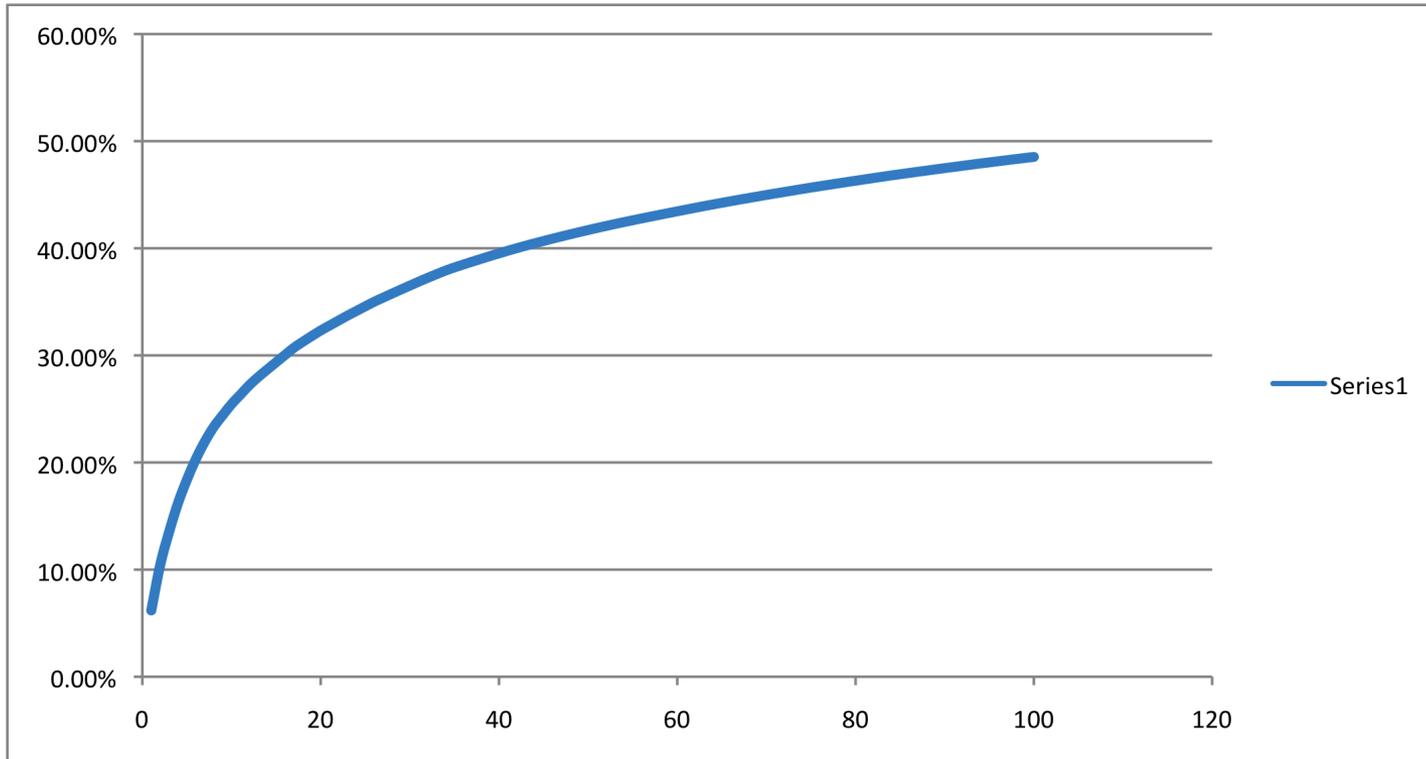
How much do learners need to know

- How many words are there in English
- How many words do native speakers know
  - About 1,000 lemmas per year of life until finishing school (why does it slow down after that?)
  - Average adult knows about 20,000 word families
- High frequency vocabulary
- Academic vocabulary
- Low frequency vocabulary
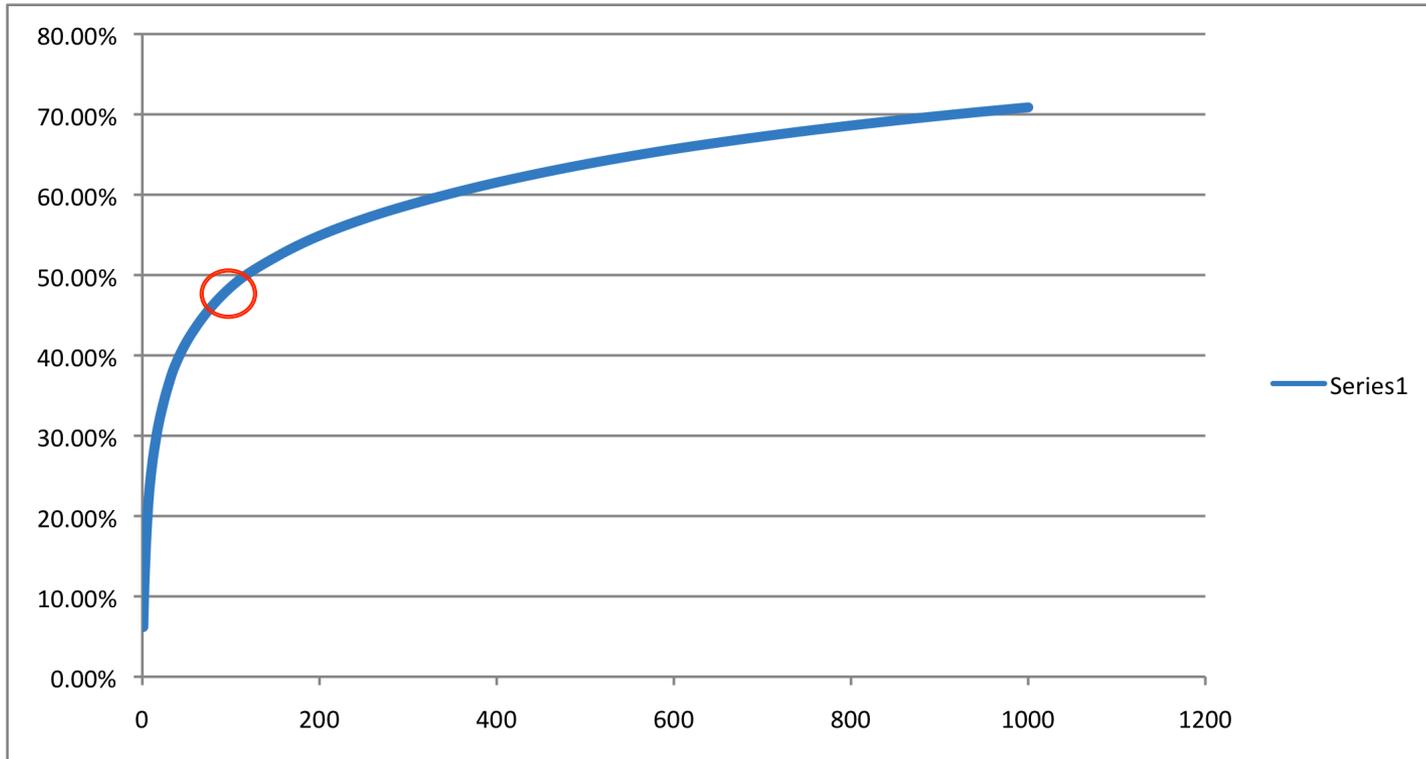
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Goals of vocabulary learning

How much do learners need to know

- How many words are there in English

- How many words do native speakers know

- High frequency vocabulary

  - About 2,000 word families

  - General Service List (GSL): not bad, but not great

  - British National Corpus List (BNC): better

  - Bare Naked Lexis (BNL): bad name, good list

- Academic vocabulary

- Low frequency vocabulary

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Text coverage (first 100 lemmas)

Text coverage (first 1000 lemmas)

Goals of vocabulary learning

How much do learners need to know

– How many words are there in English

– How many words do native speakers know

– High frequency vocabulary

– Academic vocabulary

  • Academic Word List (AWL): good but…

  • My AWL: better but…

– Low frequency vocabulary

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Goals of vocabulary learning

How much do learners need to know

– How many words are there in English

– How many words do native speakers know

– High frequency vocabulary

– Academic vocabulary

– Low frequency vocabulary

- Specialized vocabulary

- General low-frequency vocabulary

- Idioms

- Collocations

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Text coverage (first 6,300 lemmas)
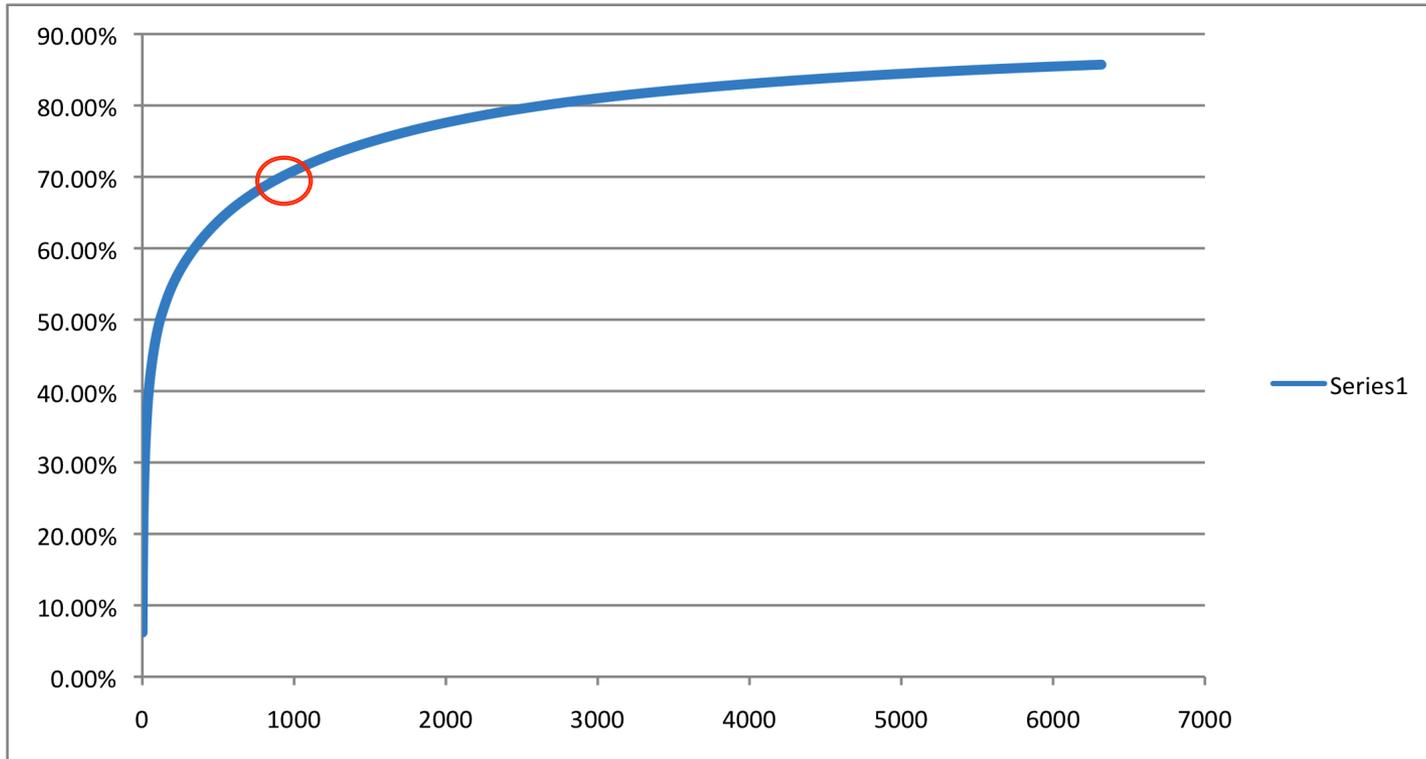
Goals of vocabulary learning

How much do learners need to know
- How many words are there in English
- How many words do native speakers know
- High frequency vocabulary
- Academic vocabulary
- Low frequency vocabulary
  - Words
  - Idioms
  - Collocations

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Idiom frequencies

- Write down your idioms and collocations and save them for later

Knowing a word

Learning burden

Receptive vs. productive

Collocations

Register

Grammar

Knowing a word

Learning burden

- Some words are easy to learn and some are hard

Receptive vs. productive

Collocations

Register

Grammar

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Knowing a word

Greater Burden	Lower Burden
long	short
phonologically unfamiliar	phonologically familiar
irregular spelling	regular spelling
new concept	familiar concept
abstract meaning	concrete meaning
few relevant links (or many distracting links)	many relevant links (and few distracting links)

Knowing a word

Learning burden

- Work more with high-burden words, especially by making links.

Receptive vs. productive

Collocations

Register

Grammar

Knowing a word

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Receptive vs. productive

Collocations

Register

Grammar

HUMBER

Knowing a word

Learning burden

Receptive vs. productive

Collocations

- http://193.133.140.102/JustTheWord/
  - Do you use *consider* + obj or *consider about* + *obj*?
  - What two verbs are most commonly used with *mind* as an object?

Register

Grammar

Knowing a word

Learning burden

Receptive vs. productive

Collocations

Register

- http://www.americancorpus.org

- Register is about where and when to use a word.

  - formal/informal, spoken/written, fiction/academic, etc.

- Which register is the verb *mind* most common? What about the noun?

Grammar

HUMBER

Knowing a word

Learning burden

Receptive vs. productive

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Register

Grammar

- Which verbs are most commonly followed by *to*-infinitives and which by present participles?

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Let's check those idioms!

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Guessing vocabulary

- Perhaps one of the most important skills.
- Often it is not possible to guess, especially with adjectives and adverbs.
- It requires regular practice.
- Students must be encouraged to read beyond the unknown word.
- When you're creating guessing worksheets, don't use real words.
  - Do use real and relevant affixes.
- Recycle reading and audio texts.
- The correct answer is not important. Good reasoning is. Be flexible.

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Guessing vocabulary

- When you're travelling, <u>splaters </u>of the flatlands will tell you directions and distances or times, "It's about 30 minutes north of here."

Guessing vocabulary

- A Greek may motion or <u>anprot</u> or say, "Follow me." Then that person will lead you through the streets of a city to the post office.

Guessing vocabulary

- People in Yucatan may believe that a quick "I don't know" is impolite; they might stay and talk to you--and usually they'll try to give an answer, sometimes a wrong one. A tourist without a good sense of direction can get very, very lost in this southern <u>castion!</u>

Guessing vocabulary

- As another example, some communities have <u>sparf</u> laws: motorcycle riders and bicycle riders under a certain age have to wear these hard hats for safety.

Guessing vocabulary

- Outside big cities, people most often use <u>pertons</u> in their directions. For example, the Japanese might tell travelers something like this: "Go straight down to the corner. Turn left at the big hotel with the sushi bar and go past the fruit market."

Studying vocabulary

Key principles

- Choosing useful words
- Memorize basic meanings
- Do NOT group similar words
- Spaced repetition for review
- Depth of processing
- Motivation

Dictionaries

Word cards

Extensive reading

Computer software

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Studying vocabulary

Key principles

Dictionaries

- Electronic or paper?

- A good bilingual dictionary

- A good unilingual dictionary
  - Longman Elementary Dictionary (Grades 3-8)
  - Longman Study Dictionary (Beginning – Low-Intermediate)
  - Longman Essential Activator (Int – High-Int)
  - Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (High-Int – Adv)

Word cards

Extensive reading

Computer software

HUMBER

Studying vocabulary

Key principles

Dictionaries

Word cards

- Very powerful, but…
- Most students won't use them individually
- Use them in class.

Extensive reading

Computer software

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(V: intransitive)

agree

When two people **agree** about something, they have the same ideas. They both think the same things are true.

- *We **agree** that it will probably rain this afternoon.*

Studying vocabulary

Key principles

Dictionaries

Word cards

Extensive reading

Computer software

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Studying vocabulary

Key principles
Dictionaries
Word cards
Extensive reading

Computer software

- Websites
  - www.livemocha.com
  - www.lingq.com
  - www.lextutor.ca
  - www.anki.com

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Teaching & explaining

L1 or L2?

Instruction in how to use a dictionary

Reasons for explaining a word

Lower levels *vs.* higher levels

Anti-teaching

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