

## Beyond Key Words

or.....

## Was the dodo a sitting duck?

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It's 3.40 pm and the end of the school day. A knock on the door of the EAL room and Behzad, a boy in Year 11, announces himself, the usual smile and friendly greeting. The conversation goes roughly like this:

"Hi Mr Vazquez.... I can't come to Homework club, I'm making an exam tomorrow".

"No Behzad, you're not making an exam tomorrow".

"I am Mr Vazquez, look, here is the paper [hands me the Statement of Entry] .... Tomorrow...look."

I put on my most serious face, look him square in the eyes, and repeat, "Behzad, I'm very sorry to tell you but you are not making an exam tomorrow."

Mock agitation, a raised voice and an attempt at challenging me in a serious manner which Behzad doesn't quite pull off, as he's had three and a half years of getting used to my sense of humour. I cut him short and say:

"Behzad, you're not making an exam tomorrow.... you're taking an exam tomorrow."

His face breaks into a wide grin, he slaps himself lightly on the cheek, laughs and repeats (with downward intonation, signalling acknowledgement of a lesson learned): "I'm taking an exam tomorrow."

Behzad's background I'll share with you below, but colleagues who may be National Strategy consultants for

English and Literacy please take note: in our tidy world of word – sentence – text level analysis, there just happens to exist this big thing (for English) called collocation, a subject I will be returning to.

Behzad arrived from Iran in January of Year 8. He was literate, educated, but was a complete beginner in English. He came to the Catholic boys school where I've been teaching part time for a number of years. The school has very low pupil mobility in comparison to other schools with high EAL demands but every year we receive a few new arrivals at a very early stage of English fluency. Traditionally these pupils come from Eastern Europe (mainly Poland), South American countries and a sprinkling of Arabic speakers (from Iraq and Egypt). Because of the relatively low number of EAL mid-term admissions, EAL support within the school is able to provide sustained and long term support to these students, effectively seeing them through from arrival to their public exams at 16, and sometimes continuing on to post-16 work. But would anyone's expectation be that a pupil such as Behzad should be making this kind of error in his speech (or writing) three and a half years on?

My aim in this piece is to focus attention on an area which I believe is not receiving enough critical attention in our schools, particularly in relation to the kinds of learning goals we should be setting for pupils with English as an additional language. I would propose that given the way in which EAL teaching has been conceptualised in England over the last twenty years or so, we are (and continue to be) in danger of not adequately meeting the vocabulary learning needs of EAL pupils, and that this has direct implications for success in their public examinations and for their progression routes post 16. I will be providing some formal evidence for this claim further on. I would, however, like to begin by relating two different examples of anecdotal evidence: the first takes the form of a private communication made to me by two colleagues who have never met but both related the same occurrence taking place during a GCSE English paper; the second involves a pupil assessment I was asked to undertake in one of my local schools.

### **Anecdotes and research evidence**

During initial discussions relating to the focus for this piece, a long standing colleague in the field of EAL - Penny Travers – told me how a few years ago during a public examination in a secondary school in her local authority many of the pupils had been thrown by the wording of one of the questions. The question represented a significant number of marks as the required response involved extended writing. The pupils were answering a question on Steinbeck's novel 'Of Mice and Men', a text studied in many upper school English departments throughout England. The question itself

asked pupils to display their understanding of a central theme in the novel – the dreams the central characters share, and how these dreams (in this instance) are not realised. However, the wording of the question asked the candidates to comment on the futility of dreams. Penny Travers reported that in that examination hall there were many pupils clearly troubled by the wording of that question, specifically because they were not sure of the meaning of the word ‘futility’. This same event was also related to me by an Assistant Head in a secondary school in my local authority, claiming that it had caused significant distress to many pupils who, after the exam, felt they had not dealt adequately enough with the question <sup>(1)</sup>. Both stories were related to me approximately one year apart, by two teachers who have never been in communication with each other and who work in two very different parts of London serving a diverse spread of bilingual pupils. Were the implications of the use of the word ‘futility’ relevant to the candidates in only two schools in England in that year? I think not.

I also wear a second hat. As Head of Service I share responsibility for the EAL teachers across 14 Secondary schools in Hounslow, a borough located in West London. It is with my advisory role in mind that I’d like to relate to you my second anecdote, the story of a pupil I was asked to assess due to the concerns being expressed by her teachers. This pupil was no new arrival but a Year 13 student taking ‘A’ Levels in Mathematics, Mechanics, Physics and Chemistry. Like Behzad, the issues raised by this pupil inform a wider concern I wish to address here.

Monica was a 6th Form pupil in a local Catholic Girls school. The Headteacher had contacted me directly expressing concern regarding the pupil, who was now in the Autumn Term of her final year of study (Year 13). Monica had been in the school for just over four years, arriving at the start of Year 9 as an early stage learner of English from Italy. Although at the time of her joining there was no dedicated teacher of EAL in the school, Monica had a number of key elements in her favour: in terms of cultural, educational and religious ethos, there were clearly similarities between her schooling in Italy and her new school in London. The school itself had consistently drawn praise during government inspections (OFSTED), with the latest report in November 2006 ranking the school as ‘outstanding’. A strong system of pastoral support, very good teaching and learning throughout the school and Monica’s own background learning and prior knowledge were all important ingredients for her success in her GCSEs. However, six months prior to her taking the public examinations which would lead to gaining a place at university, alarm bells were ringing. The concerns expressed by her teachers centred around two areas:

1. The quality of her handwriting, and the difficulty teachers had of reading answers typically written under ‘exam’ conditions.
2. The organisation of the writing itself, and its lack of structure when addressing specific questions.

Monica was without doubt a very bright and capable student. Her examination record, given her arrival as an early stage learner of English in Year 9, bore witness to this. At GCSE she had achieved English Language ‘C’, Mathematics ‘B’, Science ‘AAB’, Drama ‘C’, Art ‘A\*’, Spanish ‘A\*’ and last but not least, an ‘A\*’ in Italian. She was currently taking ‘A’ Levels in Mathematics, Mechanics, Physics and Chemistry. I conducted an informal assessment, which comprised a 45 minute interview / discussion with Monica, and a reading test based on a Year 12 science text which I (with a non-science background) could understand and use to check her ability to handle inference, anaphoric reference and embedded propositions, as well as her general understanding of the text.

Monica was very comfortable with being interviewed by me and did not see this as an intrusion or an unnecessary event. She was very aware that she had a difficulty, or ‘barrier’ (her word), which prevented her from writing appropriate answers to some questions under exam conditions. Her view was that in her written responses she would ‘talk / think’ around the questions, rather than shape an appropriate coherent response with the required logical pattern. She also said that there were times when she felt not completely secure with the meanings of subject-specific vocabulary, as well as with what she called ‘ordinary’ words. With regard to the two concerns expressed above by her teachers, Monica admitted she felt she found it difficult at times to express herself in writing, and that this made her nervous and affected her confidence.

In addition, throughout the interview Monica on several occasions put forward a view of herself as lacking self-esteem and of not being a ‘good’ learner. My response to this was emphatic; her date of arrival, academic record and current engagement with subject matter (e.g. ‘A’ level Maths / Mechanics etc.) all pointed to a very bright and able student with great potential.

My initial impressions and conclusions were these:

- Monica was a fluent reader. Many of the difficulties experienced by EAL learners with reading comprehension (e.g. back-referencing words, embedded meanings etc.) did not seem to be a problem.
- When writing at her own pace, her handwriting was neat and definitely legible. It could be easily read by someone who was not used to it.

(This observation was based on two examples she had in her folder, which she said were notes written prior to an exam).

- Although she had obviously learned sufficient English to do well at GCSE, there was evidence (cited by Monica herself) of subject-specific vocabulary to which she had assigned only partial meanings. The example of ‘polar’ / ‘polarity’ in both chemistry and physics was cited by her.
- Scientific language at this level of study, where abstract concepts are being explained, will of necessity involve the use of metaphor, simile and synonymous expressions e.g. “Each atom is surrounded by four equidistant nearest neighbours”. Monica stated that she wasn’t exactly sure what this sentence meant. I expressed surprise, and when I had taken a moment to check her understanding of ‘equidistant’ and the expression ‘nearest neighbours’ she immediately understood the full meaning behind the statement. I asked her if she felt that there were other occasions where she might be coming across examples where the net effect was one of partial understanding of the text or of a key task or question, to which she replied yes.
- Her poor handwriting under test conditions was related to a sense of panic or nervousness arising from partial comprehension of some key words or phrases. Her reaction was to write as much as she could related to the topic. In other words, in answering some questions it was highly likely that she was being ‘topic’ specific but not ‘question’ specific.

I suggested some strategies which both she and her teachers could try. There was much that Monica could do to help herself. By her own admission, she did not make use of either a general dictionary or specialist subject dictionaries. As I had discussed with her, it was essential that she get into a routine of listing any technical vocabulary she was unsure of, and looking this up in the specialist dictionary. She then needed to cross reference the word to other specialist dictionaries and check the meaning there (e.g. look up ‘polar’ / ‘polarity’ in a chemistry dictionary and then also look it up in a physics dictionary). In addition, any phrases or words of what appeared to be ‘ordinary’ English of which she felt unsure, also need to be noted or highlighted with a highlighter pen. Monica then needed to check the meaning with peers or the teacher.

As to direct teacher help, I discussed the possibility with the Head of Physics of her working with Monica for a one-to-one session, applying the model for non-fiction writing suggested in the literacy strand in the National Strategy. In short, this would be looking at examples of

written answers, defining the conventions, modelling the thought processes, applying appropriate scaffolding and then practising independent writing. We agreed that 2-3 hours of dedicated, focussed teaching spread out as a few short, 30 minute after-school sessions would probably be sufficient.

Monica went on to be successful in her A Level exams. The above mentioned strategies gave her the confidence and help to ultimately succeed. However, my belief is that the underlying problem which had triggered my involvement in the first place centred on a lack of sustained and planned vocabulary development on her part. Essentially there were gaps in Monica’s knowledge of the target language (English), and these gaps were not just limited to technical language but centred more on her knowledge of collocation, idiom (literal v metaphorical meanings) and knowledge of the ‘general’ vocabulary competent speakers of English take for granted. One could draw an analogy comparing her language development to that of the building of a house from scratch: Monica’s foundations were rock solid. In Cummins’ terms she arrived with high CALP in her first language, and also in terms of Cummins’ interdependence hypothesis. <sup>(2)</sup> Monica probably engaged with the English educational system at the optimum time for her as a learner. All the rooms expected to comprise the house came together (grammatical components), and the order of the rooms as one walks through the house (the syntax) flowed with a logical pattern. However, in each room there are gaps. The kitchen has its sink, and water flows from the taps, but one of the taps is missing. The kettle lacks a power cord. The large bay windows have curtains, but the curtains are the wrong size and only drop half way down the glass.

At around the time of my meeting with Monica, a paper by Lynne Cameron (2002) was raising similar issues to those I felt lay at the heart of Monica’s difficulties. In her paper, Cameron looks at vocabulary size as one aspect of lexical development. The main data consists of the vocabulary tests scores of two groups of secondary school pupils in two schools, one Year 10 group and one Year 9. These two groups of pupils were mixed in terms of gender and language backgrounds. There were 96 English as first language speakers and 71 English as additional language speakers, a total of 167 pupils involved in the study. The majority of the EAL pupils were born in the UK or long-term residents, with eight of these having had less than five years of residence in the country.

The pupils’ vocabulary sizes were measured in terms of the number of sample words they recognised in the various tests set at different levels of most frequent words, e.g. first 1000 words (1K), second 1000 (2K) and so on. The tests used were the Levels tests. These tests were designed to give an estimate of vocabulary size for

second language learners of general or academic English. The rationale for using these tests stems from an acceptance amongst researchers that vocabulary size is directly related to the ability to use English in various ways. Researchers working in this field agree that the 2,000-word level represents the most suitable limit for high frequency words, the classic list of these being Michael West's General Service List. Many of the words are function words such as a, some, to, because. The rest are content words such as nouns, adjectives and adverbs. Below is an example of 174 of the first 1000 words:

Older series of graded EFL readers are based on these lists. It is important to note that the 2000 high frequency words of English consist of some words with very high

frequencies and some words that are only slightly more frequent than others not on the list. The first 1000 words cover about 77% of the running words in academic texts. Nation (2001) makes the all important point that

*“... the high frequency words of the language are clearly so important that considerable time should be spent on them by teachers and learners.... high frequency words are so important that anything that teachers and learners do to make sure they are learned is worth doing.”*

the		do		go		give		just		both		point	
be		but		about		over		because		between		form	
of		from		than		think		good		need		off	
and		or		into		most		each		mean		child	
a		which		could		even		those		call		few	
to		one		state		find		feel		develop		small	
in		would		only		day		seem		under		since	
he		all		new		also		how		last		against	
have		will		year		after		high		right		ask	
it		there		some		way		too		move		late	
that		say		take		many		place		thing		home	
for		who		come		must		little		general		interest	
they		make		these		look		world		school		large	
I		when		know		before		very		never		person	
with		can		see		great		still		same		end	
as		more		use		back		nation		another		open	
not		if		get		through		hand		begin		public	
on		no		like		long		old		while		follow	
she		man		then		where		life		number		during	
at		out		first		much		tell		part		present	
by		other		any		should		write		turn		without	
this		so		work		well		become		real		again	
we		what		now		people		here		leave		hold	
you		time		may		down		show		might		govern	
		up		such		own		house		want		around	

One of the key findings of Cameron’s study was that there were significant differences in the scores at the 3K, 5K and 10K levels between English as first language and EAL pupils. Cameron (pp165-166) observes that:

*The result indicates that EAL vocabulary development is not reaching the levels that might be expected, or that is needed by students for examinations and full social participation. The students in the sample had received 10 years of education in the UK through the medium of English, and yet the results show gaps in even the most frequent occurring words, and some serious problems at the 5K and 10K levels. Words at 3 to 5K are considered necessary for basic comprehension in English as a second language...yet these students are one or two years from public examinations which require them, not just to understand basic texts, but to understand and produce precise accurate meanings in school and examination texts.*

Schmitt et al (2001) suggest that knowledge of around 3000 words is the threshold which should allow learners to begin to read authentic texts, and that knowledge of the most frequent 5000 words should provide enough vocabulary to enable learners to read authentic texts. Although many words may still be unknown, the 5K level should allow learners to infer the meaning of many of the new words from context, and to understand most of the communicative content of the text. Many of the students in Cameron’s study had gaps at the 5K level. Given that the sample group were students who had gone through all of their education in England, what then are the longer term implications for those students like Monica and Behzad, who are much more recent arrivals?

There is also a very important specialised vocabulary for second language learners intending to do academic study in English. This is the Academic Word List (Coxhead, 1998). It consists of 570 word families that are not in the most frequent 2000 words but which occur fairly frequently over a wide range of academic texts. The list is not restricted to a specific subject area. The words are useful for learners studying humanities, law, science or business. The list does not contain technical words but

**Sublist 1**

authority	formula	require	assume	interpret	consist
constitute	individual	specific	available	issue	context
create	involve	structure	benefit	labour	data
Define	legislate	vary	contract	legal	evident
derive	major	sector	distribute	percent	export
economy	method	similar	estimate	policy	process
environment	occur	source	function	respond	research
establish	period	theory	identify	analyse	role
factor	principle	area	income	approach	section
finance	proceed	assess	indicate	concept	significant

rather formal vocabulary (e.g. authority, define, environment, assume, correspond, document, criteria, scheme, layer, imply). Sublist 1, containing the most frequent words, is shown below:

So far in this piece there has been an assumption that the idea of what a word is, is generally a given or a shared notion. However as Schmitt (2000) points out in his introduction in Vocabulary in Language Teaching, the term word is probably too general a term to encapsulate the many forms vocabulary can take. A good example of this is given by Schmitt when looking at the meaning of ‘to die’. All of the following items are synonymous expressions within English, and are made up from one to four words:

- Die
- Expire
- Pass away
- Bite the dust
- Kick the bucket
- Give up the ghost

Clearly what we are now dealing with are concepts or ideas which are being expressed not just as individual lexical items but also as combinations of words which, in the example above, most of which happen to be phrasal verbs and idioms. The reality facing language learners of English is that the potential knowledge that can be known about a word is actually a very rich and complex process. Nation (1990) proposes the following list of the different kinds of knowledge that a person needs to master in order to know a word:

- The meanings(s) of the word
- The written form of the word
- The spoken form of the word
- The grammatical behaviour of the word
- The collocations of the word
- The register of the word
- The associations of the word
- The frequency of the word

How one goes about developing this deep word knowledge in EAL pupils within the context of how secondary schooling is organised is a very real challenge. One of Lynne Cameron's observations when trying to account for the gaps in vocabulary levels seen in the EAL pupils in her study gives cause for concern:

*Explanations for these gaps may lie in the nature of the learning environment for EAL and the possible lack of focused support it provides for vocabulary development. In the EAL situation, vocabulary coverage is not planned but arises from teaching in curriculum areas. Furthermore, intervention by mainstream subject teachers in vocabulary development may often be limited to simplification of unfamiliar words, rather than attending to the need to increase vocabulary size or to develop deep word knowledge. (page 167).*

The kinds of issues which can arise are well illustrated in the example below, which describes what happened in a lesson I was recently involved in. The teaching group was a Year 10 EAL Option. This means that EAL pupils in Year 9 have chosen EAL as one of their KS4 Options and in this particular case the focus of the work was additional support for GCSE English Language and Literature. Behzad, the pupil mentioned at the start, was part of this group. All of the pupils had arrived as mid-term arrivals in Years 7 or 8 with limited fluency in English, and the purpose of the option group was to ensure their attainment of at least a grade C in English Language GCSE. The class was looking at the debate around GM foods, and the final outcome was to be a discursive assignment around the pros and cons of genetically modified food. One of the many sources of information available which was being used as a basis for whole class reading and discussion was the following news item from BBC news on the Internet (just the first page shown below). Prior preparation involved dealing with vocabulary items which it was unlikely any of the pupils would know, checking words such as 'moratorium' and 'regulating'. The phrase 'Frankenstein food' was not too problematic as 'Frankenstein' was a text used in the English department, so the associations made with GM foods were easy to make. The title, 'A political hot potato', was also unpicked, first dealing with the idiom 'hot potato' and then extending the idea to the realm of politics and public / media perceptions. An unexpected issue, not planned for, arose which revolved around the government and political parties in general. Pages two and three which followed centred on differing views between labour and conservative politicians.

Although all of the pupils had been in the country for at least three and a half years and knew who the Prime Minister was, they could not name the leader of the

labour or conservative parties, nor did they have any knowledge of the adversarial culture of the House of Commons.

BBC News | Food under the microscope | GM food: A political hot potato Page 1 of 4

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ONLINE NETWORK [HOME PAGE](#) | [ITEMS](#) | [SCHEDULES](#) | [BBC INFORMATION](#) | [BBC EDUCATION](#) | [BBC WORLD SERVICE](#)

**BBC NEWS**

Front Page  
World  
UK  
UK Politics  
Business  
Sci/Tech  
Health  
Education  
Sport  
Entertainment  
Talking Point  
In Depth  
On Air  
Archive

Feedback  
Line function  
Site

Internet Links  
Department of the Environment  
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food  
Conservative Party  
Liberal Democrat Party  
ACNFP

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In this section  
Special report: Food under the microscope  
Genetically-modified G&A  
The power of genes  
Better test for GM foods  
Perils of far-flung pollen  
Hard-won profits  
GM food: Head to head  
Friend or foe?  
GM food: A political hot potato  
Prince Charles speaks out against GM food  
GM links

**GM food: A political hot potato**

Wednesday, March 17, 1999 Published at 18:33 GMT

Customers need a choice through clear labelling, say the opposition

The issue of genetically-modified (GM) foods has split political opinion, as it has the wider community.

**SPECIAL REPORT**  
FOOD UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

White supporters of commercial advances in biotechnology see a bright future for the UK's GM industry, a large number of critics are concerned about the health and environmental dangers that may arise from what the media has labelled "Frankenstein food".

Opposition parties are calling for a moratorium on commercial planting until research can give more details about the precise impact GM foods might have on our lives.

But the UK Government says it will stick by the advice of its scientists and by current practice, and will permit commercial exploitation of the new technology when the current research says it is safe to do so.

**Rules and regulations**

The official UK Government body for regulating GM foods is the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food's (MAFF) Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes (ACNFP).

“The release of GM crops should be put on hold”

It states that the government "believes consumers have a right to know if the products they buy contain GM"

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/special\\_report/1999/02/99/food\\_under\\_the\\_micr/280460.st](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/special_report/1999/02/99/food_under_the_micr/280460.st) 08/03/01

The most telling point in terms of gaps in pupil knowledge, however, came at the end of the lesson and arose quite by chance; it was something I had completely missed. A chance remark from one of the pupils made me check their understanding of the title header 'Food under the microscope'. All, without exception, had taken this as a literal meaning, making (in their minds) the obvious connection between this title and the subject matter of food. None had applied the proper metaphorical meaning of this idiom to the learning context. Virtually all of the students in this group went on to achieve a grade C in their English Language GCSE and went on to further academic study. It is my belief, however, that they progressed with significant gaps in their knowledge of vocabulary and idiom. Just how these gaps can be plugged is not easy to resolve.

The final lesson with this group during that Autumn Term was spent looking at the following billboard advertisement I had seen at a London Underground tube station, promoting a TV station and programme:

**Was the dodo a sitting duck?**

We had come to the end of the scheme of work, and 50 minutes spent un-picking this advert proved an engaging and enjoyable task as a one-off lesson at the end of a Term. Specifically we looked at how two idioms had been effectively combined ('dead as a dodo' and 'sitting duck'), the origin of the 'dodo' idiom, how both linked to the advert and we finished off with examples of both idioms in other contexts.

Too many instances over the years involving direct contact with EAL students has left me in no doubt that vocabulary size is a hidden issue for many students as they progress onto post 16 courses. Advice and guidance from the Strategy does mention vocabulary teaching, as can be seen from one example from the 'Access and Engagement' series below

However, what we lack is a much more and broader sustained approach to vocabulary development whereby all teachers approach their planning with a commitment to developing deep word knowledge and have an understanding that often, students may well be taking a meaning literally and not metaphorically. The whole area of vocabulary development is too big a subject to cover in one short article such as this, but taking time to consider the following questions might help to pinpoint areas for further work:

1. Vocabulary size and access to written texts – if we know that knowledge of the first 2000 high frequency words gives approximate coverage of around 80% of all written academic texts, should knowledge of these frequency words be made into a global learning target for all new arrivals?

2. The Academic Word List (AWL) features prominently in learning goals for students learning English in countries other than England. Is this not also an important group of words for EAL students in England?

3. There are times where for us as teachers we believe the link between a metaphorical and literal meaning is a shared experience between teacher and student. In the case of pupils new to English we are very aware of potential gaps in understanding. However, in contexts where the students are predominantly advanced learners of English, how do we go about making sure that this shared understanding still exists?

4. The teaching of collocation has increasingly been seen as a critical focus of study for students in international English-teaching contexts. How easily does the teaching of collocation fit into the 'word – sentence – text level' analysis used in the Literacy Strategy?

On the following pages are examples of advice sheets used when discussing issues around vocabulary with teachers:

<i>Type of difficulty</i>	<i>Examples</i>	<i>Teaching strategy</i>
<i>The word has a different meaning in everyday English.</i>	<i>tissue, cell consumer, producer, energy, power moment, trial</i>	<p><i>Ask the pupil learning EAL to make up two different sentences, each representing the word with different meaning:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The cell is connected in the circuit.</li> <li>• The prisoner is locked in his cell.</li> </ul> <p><i>For homework pupils can be set a challenge:</i></p> <p>In this text there are several science words that have different meanings in everyday English. How many can you find?</p>

## VOCABULARY

### **Collocation**

Based on M.Lewis (see below)

**1. Don't correct – collect!**

Don't just correct the mistake – give extra collocations as well, three or four for the price of one!

e.g. take, retake, pass, fail, scrape through – an exam

**2. Make the learners be more precise – point out the options:**

S: There are good possibilities for improving your job.

T: (underlines and writes in margin) Excellent promotion prospects

**3. Don't just explain – explore:**

e.g. Student asks the meaning of the word *point*:

- Why do you want me to do that? I can't see the point.
- I know you want to come, but the point is you are not old enough.
- That is a good point; I had not thought of that.
- I always make a point of saying thank you to the bus driver.

**4. If in doubt, point them out:**

e.g. What is the verb before *opportunity* in the first paragraph?

**5. Essay preparation – use collocation:**

e.g. After brainstorming words connected with the essay, add any useful collocates.

**6. Make the most of what students already know:**

e.g. Take a word such as *situation* and ask students to give you adjectives and verbs which collocate.

**7. Record and recycle:**

e.g. List collocations to recycle at a later date. When giving them to students, delete part of each one. Be careful to delete the word/words which most strongly suggest what the missing part is,

e.g. *a window of opportunity – a window of .... ?*

VOCABULARY  
Classifying and organising strategies

1. *Simple model*

Subject words	Everyday words

2. *More useful model:*

Technical words	Semi-technical words	Common core words	Common core words which may be less familiar
parabola monarchy	elevation	train time-table	quarry beneficial

3. *Tailoring the analysis to your particular subject:*

➤ e.g. Mathematics

General	Technical	Specialist
chair jug	algebra perimeter hexagon	point similar difference

➤ e.g. Science

Naming words	Process words	Concept words
cell hydrogen	digestion reflection	energy particles

4. *Two types of difficulty for EAL learners:*

Type of difficulty	Examples	Teaching Strategy
<b>The word has a different meaning in everyday English</b>	tissue, cell consumer, producer energy, power moment trial	Ask students to make up two different sentences, each representing the word with a different meaning e.g. <i>The cell is connected to the circuit.</i> <i>The prisoner is locked in his cell.</i>  Set a challenge: In this text there are several (technical) words that have different meanings in everyday English. Find them.
<b>Back-referencing words</b>	...it...they... these...	Ask students to trace back what "it" refers to: <i>Hydrogen is produced when a metal reacts with an acid. It can be tested by ...</i>

Vocabulary development for EAL students  
**Some teaching and learning strategies**

- Use grouping strategies
- Collect subject-specific phrasal verbs
- Make idioms explicit
- Ask students to note down words and share them with the class in a non-threatening way e.g. *vocabulary tickets*
- Break down words into their constituent parts, making sure that students note down both the whole word and its constituents.
- Be aware of words with both a general and specific meanings
- Highlight command words in exam questions
- Be aware of collocation - predictable combinations of words

Schmitt N, Schmitt D, Clapham C. 2001 Developing and exploring the behaviour of two new versions of the Vocabulary Levels Test. *Language Testing* 2001 18 (1) 55-88

(1) Private communication made to me by Margot Currie, Assistant Headteacher of Heston Community School, in November 2006.

(2) The 'interdependence hypothesis' can be formally stated as follows: 'To the extent that instruction in Lx is effective in promoting proficiency in Lx, transfer of this proficiency to Ly will occur provided there is adequate exposure to Ly (either in school or environment) and adequate motivation to learn (Cummins, 1996)

**References**

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National Strategy Key Stage 3: *Access and engagement in science* DfES 0610/2002