



This is a graded discussion: 10 points possible

due Mar 7

## Week 6 Questions and Graded Discussion

34 72

### Week 6 Questions

Choose two questions to answer:

1. What are some problems that the students of English might have in acquiring/learning English vocabulary?
2. What does it mean to know a word? What are the best strategies in vocabulary learning and teaching based on your experience?
3. Figure out the frequency of idioms in everyday speech. Write down all the idioms you hear in the course of one or two hours (or watch TV for one or two hours). What are the implications for teaching English?
4. This question is borrowed from *An Introduction to Language* by Fromkin et al. listed above. Choose four of the sentences below and explain their semantic ambiguity by providing two or more sentences that paraphrase the multiple meanings:
  1. He waited by the bank.
  2. Is he really that kind?
  3. The proprietor of the fish store was the sole owner.
  4. The long drill was boring.
  5. When he got a clear title to the land, it was a good deed.
  6. It takes a good ruler to make a straight line.
  7. He saw that gasoline can explode.
  8. You should see her shop.
  9. Every man loves a woman.
  10. You get half off the cost of your hotel room if you make your own bed.
  11. "It's his job to lose" (said the coach about his new player.)
  12. Bill wants to marry a Norwegian woman.

Due: March 7, 2021



← Reply


[https://](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/130203)
[Christian Aguiar \(He/Him/His\) \(https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/130203\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/130203)

Mar 1, 2021

2. *What does it mean to know a word? What are the best strategies in vocabulary learning and teaching based on your experience?*

I think to know a word, we must be able to effectively use it creatively - to use it, with some fluidity, in the kinds of genitive conversations Ladusaw describes. Because semantic meaning is so dependent on context *and culture* - Ladusaw makes the case that every meaning "is influenced by our individual and cultural assumptions and experience, which are much less visible than what is explicitly said" - I think we have to have reasonable classroom expectations. In my teaching, I would be satisfied if a student could use the word in its primary context(s) and semantic meaning - I would count on them being able to discover its alternate meanings in conversation or in subsequent courses.

When I'm learning a language, I find it most helpful to immerse myself, as much as possible, in the things I love: food, literature, history and movies. Since this is the best way to learn new vocabulary for me, I have tended to use these four areas when teaching. The key, I think, is to find something that really interests you, something that you'll want to do in your free time. I once offered a Sports English "club" on this principle: my elementary students loved sports and spent way too much time studying, so this class gave them a fun after-school activity 2-3 times a week: we could learn some basic vocabulary together, then go play the sport and use it. It was interesting, active, collaborative (I had grades 3-6 together for this class, so the older students helped the younger ones) and provided the chance for immediate practice. It did many of the things Alber writes about, though not all.

4. *This question is borrowed from An Introduction to Language by Fromkin et al. listed above. Choose four of the sentences below and explain their semantic ambiguity by providing two or more sentences that paraphrase the multiple meanings:*

The long drill was boring.

1. The students were sick of doing the grammar drill because it was so repetitive.
2. The bit on the power drill, which was quite long, was slowly making a hole in the wood.

He saw that gasoline can explode.

1. The boy watched in surprise as the can of gas blew up.
2. The boy saw proof of what his shop teacher had told him: if you put it near fire, gas fumes will ignite.

“It’s his job to lose” (said the coach about his new player.)

1. “Unless he messes up, the position is his.”
2. “I’m expecting him to go out there and lose some games for us.”

He waited by the bank.

1. He waited outside of Bank of America for the ATM to be free.
2. He waited on the edge of the Potomac River, watching the racing shells go by.

Edited by [Christian Aguiar \(He/Him/His\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/130203) on Mar 2 at 6:33am

[← Reply](#)



[Yoon-Jung Cho](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/151222)

Mar 2, 2021

Hi Christian, I think you said an important point. 'to know a word means to use the word properly'. In my case, I thought I knew a certain word, but later I realized I did not. After that, once I memorize a word/expression, I always try to use it in the right context. If I cannot use it, the word is not mine yet. For instance, I heard the phrase 'make up one's mind' 10 years ago, and I have tried to use it for 10 years, and then the expression became mine.

Edited by [Yoon-Jung Cho](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/151222) on Mar 2 at 3:01am

[← Reply](#)



[Christian Aguiar \(He/Him/His\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/130203)

Mar 2, 2021

I often think of vocabulary as in some sense easier than other aspects of language learning, but you're so right, Yoon-Jung: it can take years and years to master a word or idiomatic phrase with a few meanings. We may learn vocab before we learn other elements of language, but it's still very complex.

[← Reply](#)



[Viktorija Lejko-Lacan](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/731)

Mar 6, 2021

Christian and Yoon-Jung,

Another complication is the connotative meaning of words students may not be aware of. The use of academic words in the conversational register may also sound awkward. Sometimes, even a choice between thin, skinny, slim, or slender may lead to misunderstanding. Usually, it is easy to learn and properly use vocabulary at the beginning level (very concrete - can be easily shown with realia or visuals).

Edited by [Viktorija Lejko-Lacan \(https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/731\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/731) on Mar 6 at 12:21pm

[← Reply](#)



[Chiaki \(https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/112607\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/112607)

Mar 2, 2021

Hi Christian,

I chose the same question as you. I agree that teachers should have reasonable classroom expectations. When learning vocabulary, the priority for language learners would be to be able to use and understand target vocabulary in its primary context.

When learning a word, it's not necessary to learn the semantic meaning and its alternate meanings at once, as learners could learn more meanings of the word later on.

Thank you for sharing your great ideas!

Edited by [Chiaki \(https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/112607\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/112607) on Mar 2 at 8:09pm

[← Reply](#)



[MaryAnn Wilson \(https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/94764\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/94764)

Mar 4, 2021

I agree. Bombarding ESL students with multiple definitions isn't really helpful. It's best that they remember the primary meanings and be able to use them creatively and with some fluidity, as you said. In this way, these words become the foundation of one's working vocabulary.

[← Reply](#)



[Yoko Matsubara \(https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/161025\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/161025)

Mar 7, 2021

I agree with your sports club example. This not only helps young students but also adult learners. Through my Latin percussion classes and Salsa dancing activities I regularly attended after I came to the U.S. as an adult, I picked up basic Spanish pretty quickly before starting to learn it in an academic setting. I mentioned this in my own post too, but encouraging students to join a non-verbally based team or activity with native speakers in your community (including joining sports teams but also attending art classes, cooking classes, hiking meetups, gym studio classes, or fan activities such as attending professional sports games, concerts, etc.) can help them pick up the language with native speakers effectively in a fun and non-threatening way while keeping their confidence in the actual activity.

← [Reply](#)



<https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/161025>

Mar 1, 2021



**4. This question is borrowed from *An Introduction to Language* by Fromkin et al. listed above. Choose four of the sentences below and explain their semantic ambiguity by providing two or more sentences that paraphrase the multiple meanings:**

**Is he really that kind?**

1. "He's so sweet and kind!" "Well, don't be naïve, is he really that kind (caring, nice)? He's actually pretty cruel."
2. "I know he wouldn't finish it on time. He's the lazy kind (type of a person)." "He's usually on time with the projects he works on with me. Do you think he is really that kind (type of a person)?"

**The proprietor of the fish store was the sole owner.**

1. Anna was the proprietor of the fish store and she was the one and only person who owned the store. It was all hers, no one else shared the ownership with her.
2. "My cat used to bring back sole (a type of flatfish) from the street from time to time. Would you know whose sole (a type of flatfish) it was?" "The proprietor of the fish store was the owner of the sole (a type of flatfish). It was her sole and your cat used to steal it from her!"

**When he got a clear title to the land, it was a good deed.**

1. He got a clear title to the land, and the title he got was a good (fair, desirable) deed (contract).
2. He got a clear title to the land, and the title he got was a good (legally valid) deed (contract).

3. Getting a clear title to the land was a good deed (act) to do on his part, for the benefit of his family rather than himself. It was the right thing to do and showed goodwill to his family who had been wishing for it for a long time.

### You should see her shop.

1. "You should see how she shops, she goes on a crazy shopping spree each time she's at the mall!"
2. "You should see the store she manages, it's huge and beautiful!"

Edited by [Yoko Matsubara \(https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/161025\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/161025) on Mar 1 at 6:15pm

← [Reply](#)



[Chiaki \(https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/112607\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/112607)

Mar 2, 2021

Hi Yoko,

I like your interpretation of the proprietor of the fish store, #2! I couldn't think about 3 possibilities for the third sentence in your post. It is interesting that the same sentence can be interpreted in so many different ways as even a simple word that is used every day has multiple meanings. If a language learner only knows the primary meaning of a word, it can lead to a misunderstanding when the word is used in an alternative meaning. It's hard to learn multiple meanings of one word at once, but when learners misunderstand during a lesson, that would be the perfect time to teach the different meanings of a word to learners.

Best,

← [Reply](#)



[Yoko Matsubara \(https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/161025\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/161025)

Mar 7, 2021

Hi Chiaki,

I like your suggestion about teaching multiple meanings of a word at the right timing ("when learners misunderstand during a lesson, that would be the perfect time to teach the different meanings of a word to learners"). I'm not a teacher so the thoughtful tips and input from experienced teachers like you are very helpful!

← [Reply](#)



[Raquel Armendariz \(She/Her/Hers\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/129028) (<https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/129028>)

Mar 7, 2021



Yoko,

When I considered this question, I skipped the proprietor of a fish store sentence because I could not figure out the multiple interpretations. Thank you for clarifying. I never knew sole was a type of flatfish.

[← Reply](#)



[Viktorija Lejko-Lacan](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/731) (<https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/731>)

Mar 8, 2021



Yoko, Great explanations of ambiguous sentences. They are real stories - you could assign them to students to continue.

I see you like to go for a third explanation.

How about: You should see her shop - it looks terrible.

I guess we would need to include proper into this one.

Edited by [Viktorija Lejko-Lacan](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/731) (<https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/731>) on Mar 13 at 7:19pm

[← Reply](#)



[Michelle Akamine](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/153411) (<https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/153411>)

Mar 1, 2021



### **What are some problems that the students of English might have in acquiring/learning English vocabulary?**

Students learning English face difficulty learning vocabulary for a number of reasons. Going back to what we discussed in week 4 about phonology, some sounds can be spelled multiple ways. There are also cases where spelling does not match the pronunciation for every word either. For example, silent letters like “k” in “knight” or “b” in “climb”. I still remember being confused when learning to spell “island” back in elementary school. These rules and differences between spelling and pronunciation can make learning new vocabulary challenging.

Pragmatics and semantics also can make the process of learning vocabulary complicated. Some words have multiple meanings, so it is important to think about the context in which the words are used. Words or expressions that are idiomatic also tend to confuse students. Abler states that “students need multiple and various exposures to a word before they fully understand that word and can apply it.” Learning vocabulary is certainly not easy, but teachers can help students by maximizing exposure to new words with different contexts.

**This question is borrowed from *An Introduction to Language* by Fromkin et al. listed above. Choose four of the sentences below and explain their semantic ambiguity by providing two or more sentences that paraphrase the multiple meanings:**

1. He waited by the bank.

1. He waited by a river bank.
2. He waited by a bank (financial establishment) to deposit money.

8. You should see her shop.

1. You should check out the store that she owns.
2. You should watch her shop for clothes (items). \*implying that she buys a lot or in a manner than is considered abnormal by the speaker

9. Every man loves a woman.

1. Every man has a woman he loves (each man loves a different woman).
2. There is a particular woman who is loved by every man.

10. You get half off the cost of your hotel room if you make your own bed.

1. If you build your bed from scratch, you can get half off the cost of your hotel room.
2. You can get half off the cost of your hotel room, if you neatly arrange your sheets and blankets on the bed.

Edited by [Michelle Akamine \(https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/153411\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/153411) on Mar 1 at 7:54pm

← [Reply](#)



[Yoon-Jung Cho \(https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/151222\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/151222)

Mar 2, 2021

Hi Michelle, I'd say so. I agree with that: "There are also cases where spelling does not match the pronunciation for every word either. For example, silent letters like “k” in “knight” or “b” in “climb.”” I am glad you brought that up, and it is an important point. I am still confused with some pronunciation, and I always check the pronunciation before giving an oral presentation. Obviously, it is one of the problems for English Learners.

← [Reply](#)



[Michelle Akamine \(https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/153411\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/153411)

Mar 4, 2021

Hi Yoon-Jung,

Even for a native speaker like me, I also have to check the pronunciation from time to time. Your comment makes me wonder if there is a way to teach/learn new vocabulary without feeling so embarrassed (or pressured) about the pronunciation. I know it is a learning process and just takes time, but there's always this pressure to get it right the first time.

← [Reply](#)



[Christian Aguiar \(He/Him/His\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/130203) <https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/130203>

Mar 2, 2021

Your second point really helped me out, Michelle. Providing context - or contexts, I guess, the greatest variety of contexts - can be quite challenging. I've noticed that the students I work with who spend a lot of time in English-speaking environments, whether at work or at their kids' school or in student organizations at our college, often have a much more nuanced understanding of the language than students who primarily rely on the classroom for their English learning and, when they leave campus, tend to mainly speak their L1. I've often assumed that was just about practice or exposure, but this module - and your post - is making me think a bit more about how much more varied the former group's contextualized language experience is.

← [Reply](#)



[Michelle Akamine](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/153411) <https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/153411>

Mar 4, 2021

Hi Christian,

Thank you for your comment. It made me realize just how influential motivation is. Practice and exposure outside the classroom help to provide more contexts for students to learn new vocabulary and expressions. It's a virtuous cycle! Not saying the students who don't practice outside are bad or not motivated, but as you said, there are some noticeable differences.

← [Reply](#)



<https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/151222>

Mar 2, 2021



1. What are some problems that the students of English might have in acquiring/learning English vocabulary?

There are so many English words that have the same meaning, but the problem is the nuance of words. For instance, if I search for an English vocabulary meaning ability, a dictionary shows several words such as 'skill (at/in), ability (in), capacity (for), competence; talent', and so on. Then, here comes the problem. Which word should I choose? Which one is better in a certain situation? If I do not understand the subtle nuance of a word, I cannot use the right word at the right time. I watched a TV show one time, and the episode was about this problem. A guy wanted to say "I have feelings for you", but he did not know the proper expression, and neither know the nuance of the word 'love', so he said "I love you" too early, and the relationship broke. I think it is the biggest problem of acquiring/learning English vocabulary. (Actually, it is a problem for all L2 learners, not just English learners.)

2. What does it mean to know a word? What are the best strategies in vocabulary learning and teaching based on your experience?

I think someone can say "I know a word" when someone knows a shade of meaning. Let's think about the word 'general'. Suppose someone learns by rote the meaning of 'general' in a dictionary. In that case, it is hard to grasp exactly each meaning of 'general' in 'general hospital', 'general cleaning', 'general anesthesia', 'general attack', 'general election', 'general denial', and so on. But if someone understands the nuance of the word 'general', 'not limited to one', someone can catch each meaning of the words above mentioned.

Based on this thought, I have always been trying to understand a shade of meaning of vocabulary. When I teach ESL/EFL class in Korea later, I will encourage my students to acquire nuance of English words/expressions naturally through TV shows.

Edited by [Yoon-Jung Cho \(https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/151222\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/151222) on Mar 2 at 2:14am

[← Reply](#)



[Christian Aguiar \(He/Him/His\) \(https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/130203\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/130203)

Mar 2, 2021



I agree with your point about nuance, Yoon-Jung. I think the multiplicity and complexity of meaning that makes a language beautiful and distinct can also make it frustrating. When you're able to command the nuances, the connotations, the idioms, the history of words, and the common metaphors, you can not only communicate better but understand the worldview built into the language. But when you're not quite there yet, you think, "wait, is

this a hospital for military officers?" Or you think, "gom tang? No way, this can't be bear. It tastes like beef."

← [Reply](#)



[Yoon-Jung Cho \(https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/151222\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/151222)

Mar 8, 2021

Hi, Christian, you know the Korean 'gom-tang' joke very well, LOL.

I know it is impossible, but I wish I could meet you in person and talk about your experience in Korea later. I guess you must have lots of funny stories.

Thanks for your comment!

← [Reply](#)



[MaryAnn Wilson \(https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/94764\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/94764)

Mar 3, 2021

Hi Yoon-Jung, you make such a good point about nuance, and what to say when in a relationship. The problem isn't knowing the definition of a word or phrase but knowing its connotation. As you said with your TV show example, saying, "I love you" too early can kill a relationship. Better to say, "I like you," even though the word, like, could be used to describe your relationship with your sweater. Saying "I kinda like you," might be even better because it's understated and therefore coy (if that's what you want).

Another example: babe means a baby, but is also a pet name for someone you're in a relationship with; however, it could also have a negative connotation of sexual harassment.

TV shows should be homework for advanced ESL students!

← [Reply](#)



[Diana Burga \(https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/118042\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/118042)

Mar 3, 2021

Hi Yoon-Jung,

I agree that words are nuanced and like Christian also pointed out earlier also has a lot to do with cultural context as well. That story about the poor guy saying I love you too early made me so sad! Such an example of what students who learn a second language may

struggle with.  
thanks for your insight!  
diana

← [Reply](#)



[Yoon-Jung Cho \(https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/151222\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/151222)

Mar 8, 2021

Hi Mary Ann and Diana, I'd say so. I think the more I study, the more important the connotations of words are. And thanks for telling me the negative connotation of the word babe!

← [Reply](#)



[MaryAnn Wilson \(https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/94764\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/94764)

Mar 2, 2021

2. What are some problems that the students of English might have in acquiring/learning English vocabulary?

Since I have no experience teaching ESL, I had to dig around the web to find out what problems ESL students have in acquiring/learning vocabulary. I found a study entitled [A Study on Students' Difficulties in Learning Vocabulary](#).

<https://www.neliti.com/publications/178083/a-study-on-students-difficulties-in-learning-vocabulary#cite>), which found six types of difficulties:

1. Pronunciation: Words that are difficult to pronounce are more difficult to learn. Pronunciation was one of the most frequent sources of error and was usually caused by the lack of sound similarity between English and the students' native language.
2. Writing and spelling the word: Sound-spelling mismatches made learning words difficult. For example, when the students tried to write the word 'muscle', they just write the word that they heard—mussel. Words containing silent letters were particularly problematic: foreign, listen, headache, climbing, bored, honest, cupboard, muscle
3. Learning different grammatical forms (inflections): It was hard for the students to know the meaning of the words when adding a prefix or suffix because sometimes the meaning of the word is changed as well. Example: highlight and highlighter.
4. Difficulties in choosing the appropriate meanings of words: If a student doesn't know the exact collocation (word partners), s/he will pick the word which is closest in meaning. But if it's not correct, the whole meaning of the word may be distorted. We can say a strong wind and strong coffee, or a light wind but not a weak wind and weak coffee but not light coffee.

Also, there's a problem when two words mean the same thing. For example, you make a mistake, not do a mistake; but you do homework, not make homework.

5. Confusion in using the word based on the context: The students faced difficulties when choosing between the words, weep and cry. Although they are synonyms, weep is more formal, and tends to be used more in writing than in speech, and is generally less common. Connotations cause problems too: Propaganda has negative connotations in English, but its equivalent may simply mean publicity.
6. Idiomatic expressions: Idioms were difficult because they lacked cultural background. For example, students had a more difficult time learning 'make up your mind,' than 'decide.'

Another point the study made was that the number of words students need to learn is exceedingly large. If students don't use a particular word after learning it, it will be forgotten. The study concluded that if all students had to do was learn a word it would not be forgotten. "As it is, however, it seems that words are absorbed slowly over time and that only gradually do they become fully integrated into the learner's personal stock of words when he can use them with the same sort of fluency that characterizes the words he uses in his native language."

4. This question is borrowed from *An Introduction to Language* by Fromkin et al. listed above. Choose four of the sentences below and explain their semantic ambiguity by providing two or more sentences that paraphrase the multiple meanings:

**The proprietor of the fish store was the sole owner.**

The proprietor of the fish store was its only owner.

The proprietor of the fish store owned the soles (a type of fish).

Better yet: The proprietor of the fish store, whose business was floundering, was down to his last sole.

**Is he really that kind?**

Is he the kind to do such a horrible thing?

Is he really so kind as to shovel all the snow from his neighbor's driveway?

**He waited by the bank.**

He waited by the shore.

He waited by a financial institution.

**He saw that gasoline can explode.**

He saw the can of gasoline explode. There used to be red metal gas cans.

He saw the explosion and realized that gasoline is inflammatory.

**The long drill was boring.**

The classroom drill involving grammar exercises was boring.

The long drill was used to bore a hole in the wall.

← [Reply](#)



[Lisa Bradbury \(https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/146949\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/146949)

Mar 5, 2021

Hi Mary Ann,

You found a couple more reasons than I did for what problems ESL learners have in learning vocabulary. One thing that I said is that the difference between conversational vocabulary and textbook vocabulary can be difficult for the ESL learner. We need to teach students both. It is so important to build background knowledge also, and give students many opportunities to practice the words.

← [Reply](#)



[Simiry Cuadra \(https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/123594\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/123594)

Mar 7, 2021

Hello Mary Ann,

Writing and spelling a word is definitely a problem when acquiring English. This reminds me of my students when they write small sentences. They use their phonemic awareness to spell out a word. One example is "shirt", I had my Chinese ELL student spell it as "shert". One thing, I have learned from my past classes and other sources is that reading will help vocabulary and grammar. This is because if the student can read the word, they will be able to spell it. They know what the word is, what it means and how to use it.

← [Reply](#)



[Yoko Matsubara \(https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/161025\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/161025)

Mar 7, 2021

Hi Mary Ann,

Haha, I really liked your "The proprietor of the fish store, whose business was floundering, was down to his last sole." Are you a flatfish lover? :D

← [Reply](#)



[Chiaki \(https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/112607\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/112607)

Mar 2, 2021

1. What are some problems that the students of English might have in acquiring/learning English vocabulary?

One of the problems in acquiring English vocabulary for EL students might be understanding multiple or ambiguous meanings of each word as explained in this week's lecture. Through my experience, remembering denotations of vocabulary is relatively easy, but it was hard to acquire connotations of words although it is inevitable to acquire a language. Not knowing the connotations of words can lead to misunderstanding or miscommunication. For example, the word lemon has a negative connotation in English, but in my first language, it has a positive image. EL learners may misinterpret the situation if they don't have that kind of knowledge.

Another challenge would be learning how to use words in real-world contexts. Through teaching a world language, I realized my students were having a hard time using newly introduced vocabulary--even after memorizing them--if they were not provided with activities to practice in a context that can likely happen in their real lives. I also noticed that language learners easily mix registers and use socially inappropriate vocabulary. It can be avoided when they learn words in context.

Figurative speech and idiomatic expressions would be difficult to understand for EL learners if they don't know idioms well.

2. What does it mean to know a word? What are the best strategies in vocabulary learning and teaching based on your experience?

For EL learners, to know a word means to be able to use it in a real-life context and being able to use it in communication or to complete a task, not just knowing the definition of words.

Based on my experience, the best strategy would be presenting words with visual aids, realias, or TPR if possible. Then, providing opportunities to associate their existing knowledge with new vocabulary using graphic organizers, creating a word map, have them draw words, and play games using the target vocab. Then, students play a guessing game in which they write descriptions of new words and share them in groups or class, play online games such as Quizlet Live or Kahoot, or write and exchange riddles. I use the first 5-10 minutes of daily lesson for vocabulary and focus on the same set of vocabulary for a couple of weeks.

On a different note, I think involving students in the word selecting process(Alber, 2014) is a great approach for ESL teachers as teachers can have a pre-assessment and focus on high-frequency academic language catered to the group of students.

Edited by [Chiaki \(https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/112607\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/112607), on Mar 2 at 6:25pm

← [Reply](#)



[Christian Aguiar \(He/Him/His\) \(https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/130203\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/130203)

Mar 4, 2021

Chiaki, have you found any strategies that work particularly well for giving students a chance to practice their language skills in context when they're not living in an environment where that language is often used?

Christian

← [Reply](#)



[Chiaki \(https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/112607\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/112607)

Mar 7, 2021

Hi Christian,

I know one program for students learning Japanese in which high school students who are taking Japanese classes in the U.S. and high school students in Japan can communicate through their secure platform similar to Facebook. Students are given topics to discuss, post their comments in the target language, and exchange their opinions. It's a closed community and bilingual staff are checking all posts, so it's a safe environment for language learners.

It's not for EL students, but there must be a similar service available for English learners. Also, I thought EL teachers can create a similar environment using a learning platform or social media if it's possible to make it a private group. EL teachers who are teaching abroad can find a partner school and have their students communicate in English through the platform.

Another idea is not a new idea, but having a pen pal program. I had my students exchange letters with students in Japan before. Some students who were comfortable with exchanging their information gave out their information so that their pen pals can follow them on social media. Some of them still keep in touch with them through Instagram or other social media and practice using the target language sometimes.

← Reply



**Yoko Matsubara** (<https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/161025>)



Mar 8, 2021

Hi Chiaki,

Sorry, I'm not stalking you but you mentioned a modern-day penpal program. For one of the global volunteer organizations I've been involved in, we created small WhatsApp "buddy" groups of max. 4-5 members (each from a different country) and shared posts to get to know each other and their cultures better in a more personal way. I think this can be applied to the ESL classroom if students are willing to join. It can also facilitate socialization among students.

Though it's not for everyone as countries such as mainland China block the U.S. social media and apps (though many people go around it with VPN) so to include Chinese students in mainland China, you would have to do it on WeChat (which may have gotten banned in the U.S. by the previous administration?)

← Reply



**Viktorija Lejko-Lacan** (<https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/731>)

Mar 13, 2021



Thank you for ideas, Chiaki and Yoko. For EL students here, it is possible to exchange real letters. We would often get letters from teachers in different parts of the country introducing their students who wanted to find pen pals in Los Angeles.

There was also an attempt to use

<https://education.skype.com/a/our-walk-across-wakelet>

(<https://education.skype.com/a/our-walk-across-wakelet>)

but I don't know how successful it was.

Edited by [Viktorija Lejko-Lacan \(https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/731\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/731) on Mar 13 at 7:03pm

← [Reply](#)



[Christian Aguiar \(He/Him/His\) \(https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/130203\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/130203)

Mar 9, 2021

Thanks for all these great ideas, Chiaki. I'm afraid I don't think nearly enough of how social media can help students learn. I think of it either as an academic communication medium (higher ed twitter) or else as something that students can use to produce work. Your idea of using social media to foster communication with L1 speakers is so good!

← [Reply](#)



[Yoko Matsubara \(https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/161025\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/161025)

Mar 7, 2021

Hi Chiaki,

I, too, mentioned online guessing games in my post (in my case Skibbl which we used for a casual team-building activity at work)- thank you for sharing Quizlet Live and Kahoot. I watched the recorded lesson, "Growing Vocabulary with Beginning English Learners" and the teacher also talked about how she uses and recycles the same set of vocabulary for the entire week in different activities. Your suggestion of using the first 5-10 mins of daily lesson for vocabulary and focusing on the same vocabulary set for a couple of weeks sounds effective, as it gets lost if you don't repeat it.

Also, I may be going a little off-topic, but you mentioned that the different connotations for the same word in languages can lead to misunderstanding. It reminded me of another challenge when the student comes from a country with lots of loan words from English that they think are English but are actually not.

For instance (as you know more than I do), there are many loan words from English in Japanese (not translated into Japanese but adopted with Japanized pronunciation of

English words), but many are grammatically incorrect and some are downright funny. Examples include:

- Suffix morphemes are applied incorrectly. For instance, because you can add *-er* or *-or* to the ending of many English verbs to create words that mean “a person or thing that does (verb)” (such as traveler, player, enabler, advisor, etc.), Japanese tend to do the same to nouns. Many Japanese use the word “pa ne ra a” (“paneler”) for “panelist.” This wrong “English-derived” word is often used even in large business conferences. Likewise, there’s an informal word, “po e ma a” (“poemer”) which means poet, used to sarcastically describe people who write like a poet-wannabe with an overtly dreamy or romantic tone. Many Japanese don’t realize words like “paneler” do not exist in English, and native speakers won’t understand you if you tell them “I enjoy being a paneler” or “He’s a poemer.”
- Suffix concept is not wrong but still not the correct English word, such as “nailist” (manicurist)
- Made-up English “loan words” that were supposedly borrowed from English but either lost the original meaning or simply do not make sense in English. “Mansion” (condominium or apartment), “room mirror” (rear-view mirror of a car), “live house” (club/live music venue), “new-half” (transgender and transvestite people), “moody” (romantic), “claimer” (a consumer who makes frequent and unfounded complaints to stores and sellers of a product), “revenge” (try again to win next time after losing a game, etc.), and, well, “virgin road” (wedding aisle in the church).

It could be a both fun and practical exercise to have students look for loan words from English in their L1 and have them research if they are actually real English words!

Edited by [Yoko Matsubara \(https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/161025\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/161025) on Mar 7 at 11:56pm

← [Reply](#)

○



[Valeria Barrera \(https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/160473\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/160473)

Mar 3, 2021

**Figure out the frequency of idioms in everyday speech. Write down all the idioms you hear in the course of one or two hours (or watch TV for one or two hours). What are the implications for teaching English?**

I have been watching the TV show Breaking Bad and here's a short collection of the idioms I heard today:

"shut me out"

"spill the beans on you"

"jumping through hoops"

"drop the ball"

"doesn't lift a finger"

"back to square one"

The implications for teaching English when addressing teaching idioms to ELLs are endless. Idioms reveal a way of reasoning, expression, and feeling of an entire culture. How do you transfer that knowledge to a student that does not share the same historical, social, cultural (etc.) background as the teacher who is imparting the lesson? Teaching isolated vocabulary is not enough. Teaching grammar rules is not enough. Teaching the English language within its surrounding context (idioms, sayings, pop culture) will help the student immerse themselves in a culture, rather than just a language of words.

**This question is borrowed from *An Introduction to Language* by Fromkin et al. listed above. Choose four of the sentences below and explain their semantic ambiguity by providing two or more sentences that paraphrase the multiple meanings:**

**Is he really that kind?**

Is he really that type of person?

Is he really that nice?

**You should see her shop.**

You should see her store.

You should see her buy things.

**Every man loves a woman.**

All of the men in the world love one particular woman.

Every man has a woman to love.

**"It's his job to lose" (said the coach about his new player.)**

It's part of his contract as a player to lose games.

The player will be fired from his job if he acts against the suggestions.

← [Reply](#)



[Diana Burga \(https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/118042\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/118042)

Mar 3, 2021

Valeria,

Loved reading the list of idioma in Breaking Bad 🤔 I learned English fairly young around 6 years old abs spent formative years in Madrid, so I've noticed that idioms are an area I struggle with! My friends find it funny when I ask them to explain and idiom— like ohh you've never heard that expression before?

[← Reply](#)



[Valeria Barrera \(https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/160473\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/160473)

Mar 7, 2021

Hi Diana,

There are so many idioms on Breaking Bad! I hear many of them so often in my “real” life that it makes it difficult to identify them on the screen.

I had a similar experience to yours! Just recently, my friend told me “I’m in the doghouse this week”. And I replied “wait. Whose dog?” It completely went over my head (there’s another idiom right there!). I didn’t know that “being in the doghouse” meant being in trouble.

I’m usually one step behind idioms when it comes to my social life but I really enjoy learning them!

[← Reply](#)



[Viktorija Lejko-Lacan \(https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/731\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/731)

Mar 13, 2021

Valeria, Idioms are in their own category because students deal with a set of words, not with one word only, and sometimes they can't let go of the meaning of that one word. It creates a cognitive dissonance. Thanks for the tip with Duolingo.

[← Reply](#)



[Russell Fung \(He/Him/His\) \(https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/147480\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/147480)

Mar 7, 2021

Hi Valeria,

I put a lot of thought into the idiom, "Drop the ball." That was the first and only one I could think of for this assignment. I think that when this is taught or heard literally, an ELL student would visualize the action of dropping a ball. When applied to a context of an event, I wonder if that student would automatically get it. The phrase does seem like an obvious sports reference. It could be basketball, football, or a simple game of catch. It doesn't matter. But the imagery of dropping a ball could be universal? Anyway, that's the phrase I thought about a lot.

As for "back to square one," that I can see being truly confusing.

-Russell

← [Reply](#)



**Valeria Barrera** (<https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/160473>)

Mar 7, 2021

Hi Russell,

I love learning about idioms because I truly enjoy deciphering the visuals and the connected meaning for each one of them -just like "dropping the ball". I wonder: "Which sport? What kind of ball?". I don't think the imagery needs to be universal for it to be valid. After all, these idioms are often particular to one language (or even country!).

But I'm with you on the confusion behind them — who is thinking of all of these???

← [Reply](#)



**Lisa Bradbury** (<https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/146949>)

Mar 3, 2021

1. What are some problems that the students of English might have in acquiring/learning English vocabulary?

1. The difference in written vocabulary found in textbooks is different from conversational vocabulary.

2. Semantic ambiguity. They need to differentiate between denotations and connotations.

3. Without a background to the words, students learning English will have trouble understanding what a word means.

4. Pronunciation

4. This question is borrowed from *An Introduction to Language* by Fromkin et al. listed above. Choose four of the sentences below and explain their semantic ambiguity by providing two or more sentences that paraphrase the multiple meaning:

1. **He waited by the bank.** The ambiguity is in the word bank. “He waited by the bank until it opened so he could deposit his money”. “He waited by the bank to see if he could see a fish jump.”

2. **Is he really that kind?** The ambiguity is in the word ‘kind’. “Did he buy you flowers? Is he really that kind and nice?” Did he just snub you, is he really that kind of a person?”

3. **You should see her shop.** Does this mean an actual shop that belongs to her or does it mean to say something about the kind of shopper she is. “You should see her shop, she shops until she drops!” “You should see her shop, it has the nicest clothes in town.”

4. **The long drill was boring.** The ambiguity is in the word drill. “The long drill was boring into the wood and making a large hole.” “The long drill was boring, and everyone thought it was so monotonous to spend two hours going through the same fire drill each week.”

← Reply



**Silver Park** (<https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/147686>)

Mar 7, 2021

Hi Lisa, I like all the problems you pointed out in learning English vocabulary that there are differences between written words found in textbooks and conversational words. People can find it confusing to what to use both in writing and speaking. There are denotations and connotations in almost every word but I believe these could be learned through practice and experience rather than studying every word's meaning.

← Reply



**Melinda Cavalletto** (<https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/150435>)



Mar 3, 2021

**4. This question is borrowed from *An Introduction to Language* by Fromkin et al. listed above. Choose four of the sentences below and explain their semantic ambiguity by providing two or more sentences that paraphrase the multiple meanings:**

\*He waited by the bank.

He waited by the bank until the bank opened. He waited by the bank to watch the tide come in.

\* Is he really that kind?

Is he the kind of guy who would trick you? Is he really that nice?

\* You should see her shop.

1. Figure out the frequency of idioms in everyday speech. Write down all the idioms you hear in the course of one or two hours (or watch TV for one or two hours). What are the implications for teaching English?

The woman knows how to find a bargain when she shops. Her store is beautiful, you should see it!

\* It takes a good ruler to make a straight line.

She used the twelve-inch ruler to help her draw a straight line. The dictator was good at keeping her soldiers in order.

**3. Figure out the frequency of idioms in everyday speech. Write down all the idioms you hear in the course of one or two hours (or watch TV for one or two hours). What are the implications for teaching English?**

I watched Real Housewives on Bravo. It doesn't take a lot of brainpower to get through an episode, but it is what I needed tonight.

That was the last straw.

Speak of the Devil

The Devil made me do it.

All in a day's work.

I believe that understanding the idioms of a foreign language would be a difficult hurdle to pass for an ESL student (idiom intended!). How do you explain a sarcastic thought that would be considered a joke in English and an insult in Spanish? Idioms can be easily misconstrued,

even for a native speaker. How do we overcome the difficulty of teaching idioms? A full immersion into a foreign culture would help, including cultural activities, traditions, and social events.

← Reply



**Michelle Akamine** (<https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/153411>)

Mar 4, 2021

Hi Melinda,

I really agree with your point about how idioms can be easily misconstrued. In English, I use a lot of sarcasm around my family and friends but Japanese does not really have that. I've tried explaining to some Japanese friends what sarcasm is and I just have such a hard time. I have to be really mindful of what I say so that it does not get taken the wrong way. And yes, I also believe full immersion would help students to understand idioms better.

← Reply



**Yoko Matsubara** (<https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/161025>)

Mar 8, 2021

Hi Michelle, your comment about sarcasm not traveling well might be partly because there are different types of humor and sarcasm among countries? I can't explain this well, but often the things that many Americans find funny are not necessarily so to the Japanese and vice versa, even if they understand the meaning and the joke. Or your Japanese friends simply didn't understand the full meaning and nuances. I agree with you that we may have to be mindful of what we say with sarcasm and humor if we are talking to a language learner.

However, if it's related to behavior, it is true that the Japanese vocabulary tends to be polite, and there are not many profanities in Japanese. Young adults often ask me to teach them bad words in Japanese, but I can't really think of a really bad one even though I can think of many in some other languages including English. The worst you could say to a person in Japanese is probably "you're really, really stupid" or "drop dead"... lol.

← [Reply](#)



[Michelle Akamine \(https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/153411\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/153411)

Mar 8, 2021

Hi Yoko,

Yes! I think that's it. I've tried watching/listening to manzai many times and I just can't find it funny. The first time I went, my host sister took me to see Yoshimoto Kogyo in Osaka. I thought the reason why I didn't find it funny was because of my limited Japanese. But even years later, to this day, I still have trouble understanding what's funny and why.

← [Reply](#)



[Lisa Bradbury \(https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/146949\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/146949)

Mar 5, 2021

Hi Melinda,

I agree with you, idioms can be tricky. My ESL students in the past enjoyed learning them. I use pictures which seems to help, as most of them are humorous. Most countries have idioms so it is always fun to learn some of theirs, too. Americans love their idioms. There are actually 25 thousand idiomatic expressions in English, and we use them at a rate of three per minute! Some of the idioms you found on TV are some that I use frequently, especially, 'speak of the devil' and, 'that's the last straw'.

← [Reply](#)



[Viktorija Lejko-Lacan \(https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/731\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/731)

Mar 7, 2021

Melinda, Yes, immersion would work, but it can be substituted with movie scenes and video clips where the characters use a lot of idioms. The context and visual clues might help. However, idioms are always complicated - my friends says she can't make any

sense out of "The rain is letting up." because she can't visualize it. I am sure this is how some learners feel about other idioms.

[← Reply](#)

○



<https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/123594>

Mar 3, 2021

⋮

1. What are some problems that the students of English might have in acquiring/learning English vocabulary?

In Linguist for teachers, they explain, "Pragmatics studies how language is used by real people in real contexts, in spoken discourse and written contexts, and is highly influenced by cultural and social contexts." When a word has a definition in the dictionary, and we often use it in textbooks, we understand or have an idea that we know what the word means. However, for ELLs learning English vocabulary, this may not be the case. For example, in many cases, the term "right" may indicate the right side, the right hand, or anything "right." However, it can also indicate right as an correct. For example, I can say, "You are washing the dishes, right?" and the response will be "right." Having homonymous words can make it difficult for ELL students to acquire. Another example can be, polish. You can make it shine, or you are referring to people.

Depending on the context, words can be interpreted differently and have a different meanings. If I can add to this, words have also been involving through time. Whether it is standard English or not, words have been created and used to have new meanings. Students trying to acquire English may not be so quick to learn these new meanings and have a challenging time learning them. For example, if we read about "The Boston Tea Party" and then someone comes and says "spill the tea," it is an entirely different inference.

1. He waited by the bank.

He waited by the bank (the river bank)

or

He waited by the bank (the financial institution where you keep your money)

2. Is he really that kind?

Is he really that sweet/caring?

or

Is he really that type of person?

3. The proprietor of the fish store was the sole owner.

The proprietor of the fish store was the owner himself

Or

The proprietor the fish was the (sole fish) owner. The type of fish it is.

4. You should see her shop.

You should see her boutique/store.

You should see how much she spends shopping

← [Reply](#)

○



[https://](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/163772)

[Juan Ochoa \(https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/163772\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/163772)

⋮

Mar 3, 2021

1. What are some problems that the students of English might have in acquiring/learning English vocabulary?

I believe that vocabulary retention in students is low because of the minimal opportunity there is to effectively use the words learned in the classroom. I noticed from the students I worked with that acquiring new vocabulary was difficult. Every time I worked with them they would always ask me to teach them new words and better phrases and once I did they would forget the phrase or remember half of it. I realized that the students were only repeating the words and learning them from a list instead of using them in real context. Typically a language classroom will have a theme for every chapter, one classic American example is where a Spanish class will have a chapter on "El Mercado" (The Market) and will have a long list of words you will need to learn. Then the following chapter will be about "La Universidad" (the University). The problem with these list are that once the chapter has ended most of the words that were covered will not be relevant to the next chapter so a student will forget the irrelevant words and move on to the next set of words. The students that I worked with all mentioned that their schools mostly focused on grammar and did not really emphasis pronunciation or vocabulary.

← [Reply](#)

○



[MaryAnn Wilson \(https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/94764\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/94764)

⋮



Mar 4, 2021

Hi Juan,

This is so true! This was the case in every language class I ever attended. I think that every new lesson should build on the last, and include at least some words and phrases already learned.

← Reply



**Michelle Akamine** (<https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/153411>)

Mar 4, 2021

Hi Juan,

I wholeheartedly agree with what you said. A simple solution would be to include many sample sentences for students to see how the word is actually used in different contexts. In addition, as Mary Ann stated, "every new lesson should build on the last, and include at least some words and phrases already learned." Even if the class moves onto the next chapter, it would be helpful to incorporate some of the old vocabulary words, or even just have a day to go back and review. I have been in some classes where, for the final exam, vocabulary from the beginning of semester was suddenly brought up again. I have to spend so much time relearning everything since I had forgotten about it after the chapter finished.

← Reply



**Viktorija Lejko-Lacan** (<https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/731>)

Mar 12, 2021

Michelle, Yes, creating a cyclical syllabus where things would move from one group of words to another, with some earlier words included in the lessons that follow, would lead to building vocabulary in an intentional way. Also, some review lessons should be incorporated in the syllabus, so on their final students don't end up wondering - Did we really learn that word?

← Reply



[Viktorija Lejko-Lacan \(https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/731\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/731)

Mar 12, 2021

Juan, I agree with your observation about teaching vocabulary from unrelated vocabulary groups, so that students have no chance to make connection and better remember the new words. I believe it's worth the teacher's effort to make connections and create review lessons in which "old" vocabulary will be recycled. Vocabulary may be an area that gets least attention in world language classes.

← [Reply](#)

○



[Russell Fung \(He/Him/His\) \(https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/147480\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/147480)

Mar 3, 2021

## **2. What does it mean to know a word? What are the best strategies in vocabulary learning and teaching based on your experience?**

To know a word means being able to define it in your own words. The other part is knowing how to utilize it to best communicate and express an idea or thought. Based on my experience, the best way to learn vocabulary is through reading books of interest in a higher reading level. I like to use the tennis analogy. You gotta play with someone who is better than you, so you can level up and improve. With vocabulary, it's important to read something that's higher level and also interesting. Motivation and interest helps with visualizing new words and seeing how they're used. Getting exposure to different authors also helps put new vocabulary words in the proper and sometimes creative context.

Another way is reading scripts that are meant for stage performance. By performing Shakespeare, one has to put new vocabulary words in its context to the scene. Pronouncing the words take practice, and I always say that the best way to learn is through an experience.

## **4. Choose four of the sentences below and explain their semantic ambiguity by providing two or more sentences that paraphrase the multiple meanings.**

**It takes a good ruler to make a straight line.**

The word "ruler" has two meanings: a measuring stick, or a leader of a kingdom. In context, I strongly believe "ruler" is referring to the measuring tool. For example, I would rephrase the sentence as: When drawing a straight line, it is best to use a ruler.

However, I can see how someone else can read this differently: It takes a good leader to get his/her people to fall in line.

**Is he really that kind?**

Is he really that type of person? Or...

Is he really that nice?

**He saw that gasoline can explode.**

The word "can" has two meanings. A male saw that gasoline itself has the capability and potential to explode. This sentence is about what the person perceives or predicts. However, when reading the sentence again, I can also see that the container that holds the gasoline is the thing that exploded. The second meaning of the sentence is therefore an eye witness report of a gasoline canister exploding.

**You should see her shop.**

You should see the way that she shops. An exclamatory and imperative phrase to express the word "shop" as a verb. Or...

You should visit her store. Or..

You should see her store. The word "see" could mean to take a look or glance at the physical store.

← Reply



[Simiry Cuadra \(https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/123594\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/123594)

Mar 7, 2021

Hi Russell,

I really like your tennis analogy, "You gotta play with someone who is better than you, so you can level up and improve." I also agree you have to challenge yourself in order to get better. This includes any type of skill such as reading, speaking, playing sports, etc. The more someone does it with genuine interest then the easier will it be obtained.

← Reply



[Russell Fung \(He/Him/His\) \(https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/147480\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/147480)

Mar 7, 2021

Hi Simiry, thank you for your reply!

← Reply



[Juan Ochoa \(https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/163772\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/163772)

Mar 7, 2021

Hi Russel,

I really like the idea of performing scripts. I will never forget when my teacher had us act out Romeo and Juliet in the 9th grade. It definitely made the hard and weird Shakespearian English make more sense to me. It was also a great motivator to make me want to keep reading the story. Even now when I read for example Russian I tend to act out and change my voice to best fit the character. to do this I think students will first have to have some sort of practice or if they are complete beginners have them do something really easy and short.

[← Reply](#)



[Viktorija Lejko-Lacan \(https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/731\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/731)

Mar 12, 2021

Russel and Juan, Great point about reading or performing plays - from very simple ones all the way to Shakespeare. A few years ago, there was a research stating that learning a language through theater increased motivation, and students were inclined to participate as characters in a play since all the (language) mistakes made were by the character, not a student performer.

[← Reply](#)



[Diana Burga \(https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/118042\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/118042)

Mar 6, 2021

Choose two questions to answer:

1. What are some problems that the students of English might have in acquiring/learning English vocabulary?

I think that L2 students can confuse vocabulary items because they are misled by words or phrases that look or sound similar in both the mother tongue and the target language, but differ significantly in meaning. For example a false cognate could be *embarrassed* and *embarazada* in Spanish. They LOOK similar but have wildly different meanings.

1. What does it mean to know a word? What are the best strategies in vocabulary learning and teaching based on your experience?
2. Figure out the frequency of idioms in everyday speech. Write down all the idioms you hear in the course of one or two hours (or watch TV for one or two hours). What are the implications for teaching English?

Some popular idioms that I heard/ came up in a couple of hours are: dime a dozen, blessing in disguise, bite the bullet, have my cake and it it too. I think teaching students that just like in their L1 they have their own idioms that in English they exist as well so the words/ vocal will have a different meaning.

← [Reply](#)



[Russell Fung \(He/Him/His\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/147480) (https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/147480)

Mar 7, 2021

Hi Diana,

I like the examples of idioms that you used to illustrate how confusing this could be for L2 students. I'm a native English speaker, and phrases like "dime a dozen," "have my cake and eat it too," and "bite the bullet" still confuse me.

This makes me think about how to teach these idioms, and whether they are useful. Perhaps in more advanced language classes, we can teach those idioms. It seems like as language evolves, more new idioms pop up. Thank goodness for urbandictionary.com.

-Russell

← [Reply](#)



[Juan Ochoa](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/163772) (https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/163772)

Mar 7, 2021

Hi Diana,

Spanish speakers definitely have a hard time with cognates. The example you gave is really interesting, I can see some people getting these confused. The ones people have the most trouble are the ones that are spelled exactly the same way because people will just say it in their own language, an example could be "Explosion". I definitely think cognates could be used to the advantage of the teacher.

← [Reply](#)



[Raquel Armendariz \(She/Her/Hers\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/129028) (https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/129028)

Mar 7, 2021



Yes, Diana!

also mixing up Library for *Libreria* (book store). I've heard people whose L1 is Spanish, use the word "*ganga*" (Spanish for a bargain) to describe a gang.

[← Reply](#)



[Valeria Barrera](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/160473) (https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/160473)

Mar 7, 2021



Hi Diana,

I think that's a great way to teach idioms. Have you ever tried using Duolingo to learn another language? They have "bonus" sections where you can learn different idioms of your target language. They don't dissect the meaning for each word but, using the "gamification" strategy, they make you pick the correct answer between 4 given options. They let the student come to their own conclusions of what they think it might mean. This is a great exercise for an ELL because you will never be able to teach them all the idioms in the English language but you can definitely teach them how to guess their meaning.

[← Reply](#)



[Raquel Armendariz \(She/Her/Hers\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/129028) (https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/129028)

Mar 6, 2021



**This question is borrowed from *An Introduction to Language* by Fromkin et al. listed above. Choose four of the sentences below and explain their semantic ambiguity by providing two or more sentences that paraphrase the multiple meanings:**

**Is he really that kind?**

- Is Jack really that kind-hearted and caring? or
- Is Jack really that kind or type of individual?

**The long drill was boring.**

- The long training exercise was lengthy and tedious. or

- The job of making a hole in the ground was boring and it took a long time.

### **You should see her shop.**

- You should see her in action in the way she purchases things. or
- You should see the store she owns.

### **Bill wants to marry a Norwegian woman.**

- Bill wants to become the spouse of a Norwegian woman. or
- Bill wants to officiate a marriage ceremony in which a Norwegian woman is marrying someone else.

### **Figure out the frequency of idioms in everyday speech. Write down all the idioms you hear in the course of one or two hours (or watch TV for one or two hours). What are the implications for teaching English?**

- Take a rain check
- The perfect storm
- Under the weather
- Break a leg
- Take it with a grain of salt
- There's a method to her madness
- Jump on the bandwagon
- A blessing in disguise This one, I have heard non-native speakers, AS WELL as native speakers, say, "A blessing in the sky" instead of the actual idiom, which I find amusing.

An idiom is a phrase with a figurative meaning that can't be understood just by knowing the meaning of the words inside the phrase.

Wikipedia states there are over 25,000 idioms in the English language. I think that number may be significantly higher if one considers regional dialect, generation-related vocabulary, youth slang, and "shop talk" or jargon from various professions. Teaching idioms to learners of English is important because it is part of conversational fluency.

I ran across this interesting study on the subject

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/313545848\\_Strategies\\_and\\_Difficulties\\_of\\_Understanding\\_English\\_Idioms\\_A\\_Case\\_Study\\_of\\_Saudi\\_University\\_EFL\\_Students](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/313545848_Strategies_and_Difficulties_of_Understanding_English_Idioms_A_Case_Study_of_Saudi_University_EFL_Students)  
([https://www.researchgate.net/publication/313545848\\_Strategies\\_and\\_Difficulties\\_of\\_Understanding\\_English\\_Idioms\\_A\\_Case\\_Study\\_of\\_Saudi\\_University\\_EFL\\_Students](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/313545848_Strategies_and_Difficulties_of_Understanding_English_Idioms_A_Case_Study_of_Saudi_University_EFL_Students))

Table 2. Difficulty of learning idioms

Difficulty	Descript statistics Mean
1. Idioms are difficult to understand because of the lack of cultural background behind the idioms.	4.28
2. Idioms are difficult to understand because of the lack of experience dealing with idioms.	4.30
3. Idioms are difficult because they are not part of the courses' syllabi.	4.35
4. Idioms are difficult because they are not taught well in class.	3.65
5. Idioms are difficult because the cultural courses I studied were not efficient.	4.00
6. Idioms are difficult because they have unfamiliar words.	3.20
7. Idioms are difficult because they have no analogue in Arabic.	3.62
8. Idioms are difficult when they have no context.	3.11

This part introduces the findings obtained from the questionnaire on the difficulty of understanding idioms. As shown in Table 2, all students seem to have difficulties understanding idioms. This could be related to the fact that idioms are arbitrary and nonliteral (Hussein et al. 2016). It could also be related to the fact that idioms were difficult because they are not part of the courses' syllabi (Al-Khawaldeh et al. (2016). In other words, and to the best of the researcher's knowledge, the courses that are specially designed for learning idioms; instead, idioms might occasionally be included in the courses. This result supports other researchers' findings that the majority of Arab English learners have difficulties in acquiring, understanding, and using idioms (Al-Kadi, 2015; Saleh & Zakaria, 2015). This could be ascribed to the lack of experience dealing with idioms as well as the lack of exposure to idioms. Similarly, most of the participants pointed out that idioms are marginal in the cultural courses they took were not sufficient, as they are not taught well in class. This is in line with students were deprived of opportunities to learn idioms properly in the class (Zakaria's (2013) findings. Moreover, the results illustrated that the participants had difficulties understanding idioms with no analogue in their L1 (Arabic). This is in line with the findings that L2 idioms with no analogue in the mother tongue are more difficult to grasp (Zakaria, 2013). The responses indicated that idioms with unfamiliar words and those without context were more difficult to understand (Al-Kadi, 2015; Saleh & Zakaria, 2013).

Edited by [Raquel Armendariz \(https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/129028\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/129028) on Mar 7 at 9:39pm

← [Reply](#)



[Yoko Matsubara \(https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/161025\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/161025)

Mar 7, 2021



Oh, I hadn't thought about the possibility you mentioned in the second example for "Bill wants to marry a Norwegian woman." I was just focused on "a Norwegian woman" and wasn't paying attention to the verb "marry," which you did. Thank you for bringing that up!

I had thought:

1. Bill wants to marry a specific woman (his girlfriend, a favorite actress, etc.) who happens to be Norwegian.
2. Bill likes Norwegian women in general and wishes to marry one (any) of them- he is looking for an unspecified Norwegian woman now.

← [Reply](#)



[Raquel Armendariz \(She/Her/Hers\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/129028) (https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/129028)

Mar 7, 2021



Oh, Yoko

you are right in pointing that out. It's interesting, I focused on the verb (or the act), you saw the different semantics possibilities in the noun. Language is so fascinating!

← [Reply](#)



[Viktorija Lejko-Lacan](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/731) (https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/731)

Mar 13, 2021



Raquel, Thank you sharing the information about the number of English idioms. And yes it is true there may be more, or the ones used in a different part of the country are different from the ones a student learned here. "A blessing in the sky" - it's quite logical that someone would hear that particularly if they are not familiar with the word "disguise". How can anyone who doesn't take into account these are idioms make sense out of "shoot the breeze" or "break a bill"?

← [Reply](#)



[Juan Ochoa](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/163772) (https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/163772)

Mar 7, 2021



1. What does it mean to know a word? What are the best strategies in vocabulary learning and teaching based on your experience?

to know a word you must be able to effectively use it in a sentence. knowing the literal meaning does not always mean knowing a word, this is because in certain context words can be used differently or even the word is used in a different meaning for example the word "literal". In my experience I have seen students struggle with vocabulary, usually more with synonyms. Students seem to be learning vocabulary like a series of lists that need to be memorized. after the chapter ends the list will be replaced with another one and usually the student will forget some of the words. Instead of moving on to a new list new words should be integrated into the new chapter while keeping the rest of the words in the lesson. Students should all of a chance to repeat the words as often as possible in order to retain them.

← [Reply](#)



<https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/161025>

Mar 7, 2021

1. **What does it mean to know a word? What are the best strategies in vocabulary learning and teaching based on your experience?**

To know a word is to understand its meaning(s) in a holistic way, not limited to semantics but also pragmatics including connotations, multiple meanings, nuances, and transformations, and to be able to make it your own and use it in various real-world settings. I am not sure if one can fully “know” a word, but it is a fascinating concept.

For me, languages are great communication tools but not the final goals themselves, so while it is of course ideal if you can really “master” the language like a native speaker, for most people (other than professional writers, academics, translators, and such) I think it is acceptable as long as native speakers can understand you without misunderstanding what you meant to say, even if it’s not impeccably perfect.

While I think multi-sensory experiences such as watching TV sitcoms, movies, etc. are great for learning colloquial expressions in a pragmatic, real-world setting in a fun way, I think reading is also still immensely important to expand vocabulary. You can get passive with just watching and listening, but you are active when you are reading because the story doesn’t advance if you stop reading. There is immense information written in English on the internet about anything and everything, so it is quite easy to find online news or stories about something you personally care about in the target language.

If watching the TV, etc., I would suggest playing with live captions on and off so that students can associate the spoken words to the written, and vice versa. Since English has irregular

spelling-pronunciation relationships, it helps to see the written text at least once.

One of the best ways that have worked for me to build writing skills and vocabulary is to summarize in my own words what I read and understood after reading something, to be able to teach it to someone else. Especially if it is a topic that I care about, it makes me want to share the knowledge effectively, so it forces me to make an effort to look for the right vocabulary to express my thoughts, which gives me good training.

When introducing a new vocabulary in the classroom, I would also introduce synonyms and antonyms as appropriate (without bombarding the students with too many words), especially the latter because not only does it expand students' vocabulary, knowing antonyms helps clarify the definition of the new word (for instance, "fast" can be understood as "not slow"). I would also mention the plural form of the irregular nouns (such as foot/feet, tooth/teeth) if they are usually used in plural forms.

Getting inspiration from Robert Marzano's Six Steps (as quoted in the article by Rebecca Alber, "Doing It Differently: Tips for Teaching Vocabulary") to make vocabulary learning fun, I would incorporate visual gamification as well.

One of the things I receive a great response for when I casually teach Japanese to foreign visitors is to have them click on "images" too when they look up a new word on Google. For instance, if you have them Google the Japanese word "kawaii" ("cute, adorable" but the word is often mentioned with the specific connotation of Japan's culture of cute), I have them also click on "Images" from the top navigation bar. You can see a lot of visual examples of what it's meant to say beyond what the English speakers may think of the word "cute." It can help them better understand the word's connotations in a memorable, visual way.

I would use this for teaching English vocabulary as well. Googling on the "Images" tab can produce visual aids even for abstract words. For instance, if you Google the word "empathy" and click on "Images" from the top navigation bar, you see a lot of images of one person holding another person in support and such, and most images are soft and supportive. When you do the same for the word "sympathy," you suddenly see images of flowers, older people getting consoled, angels, and sympathy cards in a sadder tone, so students can visually see the difference not only in the meanings of the words but also the context and nuances in which they are typically used, getting visual hints for both homonyms and polysemes.

If they are beginners, I would also incorporate "Pictionary" games such as [skribbl - Free Multiplayer Drawing & Guessing Game](https://skribbl.io/) [\(https://skribbl.io/\)](https://skribbl.io/) or host a similar drawing and guessing game on House Party app, etc.

Situational role plays in a realistic setting would also help with pragmatic vocabulary learning. While I have not worked as a professional teacher, I feel ESL teachers (especially if teaching in the target language country) not only teach the language but also coach life skills in the culture of the host country.

For instance, mock job interviews would be a good exercise both for building vocabulary and life skills if you are a new immigrant. If you are teaching in the target language country, encouraging students to join non-verbally based activities such as sports teams, dance lessons, art classes, etc. with native speakers in their community would also help students learn the language in a peer-to-peer context in a non-stressful manner.

For pronunciation and speaking skills, I would pair up students, have them record each other and review their own so that they can hear what they really sound like when speaking the target language. We all “hear” our own voices every day, but they are different from what the others hear of you. Many of us really do not know what we actually sound like to others. When I had to present a session to a large audience in a professional setting several years ago, I recorded myself to check my performance while practicing, and I was almost shocked to find how I really sounded. I got to see how my mouth looked like it was not moving much, and I could not hear certain sounds even though I know I was pronouncing them. It really helped me to identify what to improve on, so I’d incorporate this into my class for intermediate and advanced students.

For speaking, one of the methods that have worked for me in the professional setting is to watch and imitate people who are good at public speaking (Barack Obama, Steve Jobs, TED speakers, etc.). It doesn’t matter what their political inclinations are, as this is about how to speak and communicate well, not only pronunciation and vocabulary, but also such skills as pausing, pacing, gestures, and the use of personal storytelling to engage the audience.

People who are good at public speaking express themselves well using just simple words without difficult jargon, which makes it easy for learners to follow. These speeches are all easily available on YouTube and are usually shorter than sitcoms and movies so it’s easier for busy working adults to practice them repeatedly. Again, by turning on and off the written captions so they can connect the spoken words to the written words.

← [Reply](#)



[Silver Park \(https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/147686\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/147686)

Mar 8, 2021



Hi Yoko, I agree with what you said here "Situational role plays in a realistic setting would also help with pragmatic vocabulary learning. While I have not worked as a professional teacher, I feel ESL teachers (especially if teaching in the target language country) not only teach the language but also coach life skills in the culture of the host country." Learning a language cannot be possible if just studied by books, it needs to be practiced and used in realistic settings with words that are used pragmatically in real life situations. I also agree that English teachers not only teach the language but also present the culture as well. It is amazing to see the relation between culture and language which I always love to study and learn about. You can not measure how much a person can learn and use the

language spontaneously as he/she absorbs the culture and learning environment around them.

← [Reply](#)



[Silver Park \(https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/147686\)](https://my.uclaextension.edu/courses/32476/users/147686)

Mar 7, 2021



### **1. What does it mean to know a word? What are the best strategies in vocabulary learning and teaching based on your experience?**

When a person comes to know a word, he/she comes to an understanding of its basic meaning and its function and position of structures that make a form of sentences. The more vocabulary you know, the better you comprehend the language. One of the best strategies in vocabulary learning and teaching based on my learning and experience is the Audio-Lingual Method. The Audio-Lingual Method is when students are trained and conditioned to targeted vocabulary and grammar in order for them to use it spontaneously and without thinking in their native language. Students are stimulated through shaping and reinforcement so they can overcome their native tone and obtain the new habits of using the target language. It's when the teacher breaks down sentences into smaller parts and word by word for students to repeat after the teacher over and over again. I find this strategy effective because learners can really get the words down in their minds. In addition, reading is also a great way of earning more vocabulary and gaining an enlarged range of vocabulary you can explore from.

### **2. What are some problems that the students of English might have in acquiring/learning English vocabulary?**

Students often can go back to what they are used to, which is L1. Their habits of using their native language might stop them from acquiring the target English vocabulary. The complexity of word knowledge can also be a barrier in learning words. Lastly, there may be a lack of practice and too many words at one time. Building a habit of using vocabulary could be a great way to acquire what's learned.

← [Reply](#)