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Language acquisition and the teaching of English: the case of vocabulary

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Rather than look abstractly at the applications of language acquisition research to language teaching this presentation will look at the teaching of the single area of vocabulary.

Word meaning is far more complex than assumed in contemporary language teaching, which is based primarily on ideas of frequency and of word-to-word correspondence. Words need to be considered as 'lexical entries' that have a phonological form, a range of components of meaning, associations, and relationships and a close link to the structure of the sentence in all sorts of ways; the lexical entries from the first and second languages are closely linked in the mind. The lessons to be drawn on vocabulary concern the sequencing of vocabulary in teaching, the integration of vocabulary teaching with the teaching of structure, and encouraging the learners to have a viable relationship between the words of the two languages in their minds.