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## Knowing a Word

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When teaching vocabulary in a foreign language we need to bear in mind that children are still building up their L1 vocabulary (especially 2<sup>nd</sup> graders in our country) and are still in the process of acquiring and organizing concepts. This makes the learning of vocabulary in a foreign language a complex matter. Furthermore, it is a continuous process that can carry on throughout their lives. Children are faced with three different but related vocabulary learning tasks which Aitchison calls **labelling**, **packaging** and **network building**. In **the labelling task**, children must discover that sequences of sound can be used as names for things for example, **a ball** or **a biscuit**. In the packaging task, children must find out which things can be packaged together under one label. Cameron (1994) points out that children learn basic level meanings before their **superordinates** or **subordinates** and she gives the example of **chair** and **animal** or **Dalmation**. In the network-building task children must work out how words relate to one another.

Vocabulary learning involves many different types of knowledge. It can be said that the types of knowledge may not all be equally important **knowing** a word. For example, we can assume that in the early stages of learning less importance will be paid to aspects of form as **spelling**, **grammatical description** and **grammatical changes** that came made a word. More attention is likely to be paid how a word is **pronounced**, **its meaning** and **its use**. Importance will also depend on whether or not the word is required for active or receptive use and the usefulness of the word for future use.



## ***Vocabulary size, selection and learnability***

A realistic target for children learning a foreign language might be around 500 words a year but this will depend on different factors such as ***the learning conditions, time available*** and ***learnability of a word***. With regard to learnability, here are seven factors that are useful to take into account (White, 1988):

- 1. Demonstrability**
- 2. Similarity to L1**
- 3. Brevity**
- 4. Regularity of form**
- 5. Learning load**
- 6. Opportunity**
- 7. Centres of interest**

***Knowing a word means.....***

<b>Metacognitive awareness</b>	<b>Involves</b>	<b>Example</b>
Language – receptive awareness	Understanding a word when it is spoken and or written	
Cognitive – awareness of effective memorizing and recall strategies	Remembering it and recalling it when it needed	
Language – conceptual awareness	Using with the correct meaning	Not calling a table a chair
Language – grammatical awareness	Using it in a grammatically correct way	She dances very well ( not she dances very good )
Language – phonological awareness	Pronouncing correctly, e.g. so other people can understand	
Language – collocational awareness	Knowing which other words it can be used with	A fast bike not a quick bike
Language – orthographic awareness	Spelling it correctly	
Language/social – pragmatic awareness	Using it in the right situation	
Language/cultural/social – connotational awareness	Knowing if it has positive or negative associations	
Language – metalinguistic awareness	Knowing how to describe a word	Medal is a noun , fast is an adjective