

Introduction

Why Writing Teachers Should Care about Vocabulary

More than 40 years ago, Richards (1976) commented on the apparent neglect of vocabulary among scholars and teachers in the field of second language teaching. Since then, there has been a steady increase in interest among researchers and classroom teachers in the contribution of vocabulary knowledge to language use in general. While much of this focus has been on the link between reading and vocabulary in terms of the role of reading in vocabulary learning and in terms of the importance of vocabulary knowledge when reading, there has not been comparable interest in the role of vocabulary in writing. This is reflected in the observation made by Folse (2010, 2020) that vocabulary is widely viewed as the responsibility of the reading teacher although what actually happens in the language classroom is shaped by teacher preferences.

Where do we stand with regard to our understanding of the role of vocabulary in writing, and why should writing teachers be concerned about the vocabulary knowledge of their L2 learners? A useful way to approach these related questions is to consider the centrality of writing in second language learning. We can think of this in terms of writing development in early childhood and elementary school programs, where literacy development in the **L1** (i.e., the first language or mother tongue) informs literacy development in the **L2** (i.e., the second, foreign, or additional language). As learners build up their understanding of the world and accumulate vocabulary knowledge needed to express their ideas and understanding, the link between vocabulary knowledge and writing is apparent. Put simply, without words, language cannot be produced, and the

more words one knows, the greater the scope for discussing ideas in writing with detail and sophistication.

As students progress into secondary school and beyond into tertiary study and working life, important words associated with specific areas of the syllabus, academic disciplines, and professional life need to be acquired. These technical words allow for subject-specific discussion of ideas. In addition, academic words can provide a subject-independent framework for tertiary students to present ideas in their writing.

Writing teachers have a central role to assume in shaping attitudes toward vocabulary in the writing class. They can guide students with building up knowledge of words that will enhance the quality of writing; they can provide their learners with activities and tasks that scaffold the process of introducing newly acquired words into writing; and they can provide feedback on the accuracy and appropriateness of word choice. Teachers can also introduce their learners to online resources that can play a role in vocabulary development and guide their students with independent learning of words for use in writing.

The Purpose of This Book

The purpose of this book is to provide writing teachers with principled approaches to focusing on vocabulary in second language writing, with appreciation of the differing contexts for writing and how that affects vocabulary needs and use. In preparing the book, considerations were given to the changing field of language teaching and the ways that emerging ideas may shape how existing and new L2 writing teachers interact with the ideas addressed in the book's chapters. The field of language teaching has seen a shift in language teaching pedagogy toward a **post-method era** (Kumaravadivelu, 2006), where it is no longer deemed appropriate for a set methodology to be adopted in a teaching context without appreciation for the specific needs, values, and beliefs of teachers and students. We have seen a shift, particularly in bilingual and multilingual education research, toward embracing a multiplicity of

languages in the L2 classroom, involving a breaking down of traditional barriers between languages to create a space for **translanguaging** (García, 2013), in which the full linguistic repertoire of students is valued and utilized. Ortega (2013) talks of a **bilingual/multilingual turn** in second language teaching, which takes more account of the languages students bring with them into the language classroom. This shift removes imbalances in power and the marginalization of community and indigenous languages stemming from decades of discriminatory language policy and practice (Spolsky, 2007). We are seeing writing viewed in its disciplinary and social context, with ideas about writing across the disciplines, taking hold in L2 writing pedagogy. This recognizes the impact of social setting on the nature of and expectations of writing. Belcher (2012) highlights the **context-bound** nature of writing, suggesting the need for views of L2 writing to be sensitive to the setting in which it occurs and specifically to the knowledge, experiences, and aspirations of the writer. This book seeks to anticipate the theoretical and pedagogical world in which L2 writing teachers will engage with their learners in the process of writing development in the coming years.

Organization of the Book

The book presents a range of perspectives on vocabulary use in L2 writing through the eight chapters that cover: why vocabulary is important to L2 teachers (Chapter 1), what it means to know and use words (Chapter 2), how context shapes word use (Chapter 3), the ways of measuring word use in writing (Chapter 4), approaches to encouraging and enhancing word use in writing (Chapter 5), treatment of vocabulary errors in writing (Chapter 6), technological applications with vocabulary (Chapter 7), and fostering learner autonomy (Chapter 8). The chapters conclude with key points arising from the discussion and tasks and discussion questions for teachers. Sample activities that can be used in primary/elementary school, secondary school, and tertiary settings are included in the

book in select chapters that have a strong classroom teaching focus embedded in the discussion (Chapters 2, 3, 5, and 8). I hope that the book serves as a discussion piece for teachers to come to their own informed understandings of how they wish to shape teaching and learning behaviors among their multilingual writers with regard to vocabulary use.