

## NEW PUBLICATIONS ... NUWE PUBLIKASIES

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*Essential words for the TOEFL: Test of English as a foreign language.* New York: M.A. Hauppauge, Barron's Educational Series, Inc. 1993.

There has been emphasis on vocabulary development as a core component of language proficiency. Much of the semantic burden of various codes in the communication process is borne by words. The world-wide popular publication *READER'S DIGEST* has for decades carried the feature "It pays to increase your word power". Articles in language teaching journals show teachers ways to teach vocabulary. The TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language), an examination required for entrance by over 3000 tertiary institutions around the globe, allocates 20% of its items solely to vocabulary.

An understanding of words at advanced levels is essential for success in, as well as entry into, college and university English medium studies undertaken by foreign language learners of English (EFL learners).

The book *ESSENTIAL WORDS FOR THE TOEFL* is written to prepare learners specifically for the vocabulary section of the test. Because language is whole, mastery of this book will in all likelihood prepare users for other sections of the TOEFL as well. Furthermore, this book goes beyond preparing the student for the TOEFL; it prepares learners for success in their English medium studies. It does this by stressing not only content, but also emphasising strategies and presenting tools for life-long language development. By using this book, learners are likely to accomplish a lot in a short time, with enduring benefits.

Which words should the learner study for TOEFL purposes? The *OXFORD ADVANCED LEARNER'S DICTIONARY* (1989) lists over 55000 entries, but happily for the learner, only some are likely to appear in the TOEFL vocabulary section. About 4000, according to one expert, are used consistently. In any one TOEFL test, the learner is likely to find that most of the words in the vocabulary section (about 60%) come from these 4000. Thus, knowing the words in this book will help learners to focus their efforts on the vocabulary they will need for a good vocabulary test score. Certainly, studying this little book is more feasible than working through a dictionary of 55000 words.

While 450 entries are given, the number of targeted words is three times as large when derivatives are included. Synonyms and other contextual vocabulary, assumed to be known already, are practised here and possibly extended.

The book makes no claim to be "communicative", unlike so many learner materials now on the market (some of which may not be really communicative in any case). In fact, it is rather traditional in its learning theory approach. However, it does provide context at sentence level. It also requires the reader to be interactive in the sense of giving an answer and checking to see if it is correct. The purpose of the book is to assist in test-taking, which it does. The good part is that a degree of language mastery is likely to result as well, especially at the recognition level.

### OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

*ESSENTIAL WORDS* starts with the "big picture" of the TOEFL, explaining the test and the vocabulary section within it. This in itself gives readers useful preparatory information.

Six proven vocabulary-building strategies are given, including advice to read often, make word lists with synonyms and learn them, and learn word roots, prefixes and suffixes (music to the ears of many language instructors).

The dictionary and the thesaurus are presented as learning tools by means of well-explicated sample entries. The learner is shown clearly how to use them as tools.

Word-attack skills include showing the reader how to use roots, prefixes and suffixes for understanding words. The most common of these are given and clearly explained.

In Chapter 6, 450 essential TOEFL words are presented in 30 lessons. This chapter is the core of the book. Each lesson contains 15 words likely to appear on a form of the TOEFL. Each word is given with one or several appropriate definitions, with a synonym, and with two contextualised examples. One example uses the word as is, in a sentence, and the other example uses a derived form of the word.

After each lesson there is a 10-item multiple-choice exercise, consisting merely of words (no context), to help establish these words in memory. Then come five contextualised vocabulary test items written in the TOEFL format. The learners can check their responses with the answer key in the back of the book. Somewhere in these five items, in the sentences or possible answers, all 15 words of the lesson are used. This redundancy makes review natural and easy. Review is also cumulative; each lesson and test incorporate many words from previous lessons.

The vocabulary sections from two sample TOEFL tests are included as practice tests, along with instructions for self-scoring and interpreting the scores in TOEFL terms.

Finally, an index of the 450 words provides an easy means to check familiarity when starting to work through this book, and also facilitates review. The index gives the page for locating explanatory material for each word.

## **EVALUATION**

For many reasons, *ESSENTIAL WORDS FOR THE TOEFL* is extremely useful. Firstly, its content is based on a scientific selection of likely TOEFL words. Secondly, the words are given and studied in a manner harmonious with the context of the TOEFL itself. The book is not a "cram" support, but promotes wider English language development at an advanced level. It teaches the reader solid study skills rather than gimmicks or a "quick fix".

Strategies specific to vocabulary learning and test-taking are identified, explained, and reinforced throughout. Built-in review reduces study time. The clear writing style and interesting, purposeful redundancy contribute to its user-friendliness for the foreign language learner.

This book can be used easily for self-study, as well as with a partner or even in a class. Frequent tests give learners a way to quantify their gains regularly and monitor their own progress. The learner interacts with the book in the truest sense.

While several general TOEFL preparation books are available, this one fills a void by its focus and style. It does so efficiently, vigorously, and creatively. It is a MUST for prospective tertiary EFL students who want to gain acceptance to and succeed in English-medium studies.

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