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*Teaching Vocabulary with Special Reference  
to EAP Reading for Commerce and Accountancy*

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CULI

**Introduction**

The students who attend the second year EAP course for Commerce and Accountancy at Chulalongkorn University need to acquire and to be able to use many academic skills. Emphasis is placed on reading and writing skills. As part of this course the students have to read academic texts drawn from textbooks, journals and magazines, and they have to write a paragraph (or paragraphs) on various assigned topics. They will have to develop the skills which are learned in their later English courses.

Vocabulary seems to constitute a major obstacle for most students. After reading for a while and encountering some new items of vocabulary, some students are likely to complain that the text is too difficult for them and to simply give up. In consequence, their interest and motivation are both likely to fall away. How can we encourage the students to go on reading with interest? What kind of words do we need to teach and how can we teach them?

**What to teach ?**

Obviously, in teaching English as a foreign language, it is not expected that the student knows *all* the vocabulary. More often, language teachers have assumed that the student is familiar with concepts and is in possession of some background knowledge of the subject. Although the other subject lectures are mostly in Thai, many English technical terms to be found in business are often used, for example, invoice, pro forma and letter of credit. In fact, a large number of vocabulary items in the field of commerce and accountancy are used as part of the every

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day English language, for example, profit, loss and credit. Here we are discussing two types of vocabulary :

- a) technical vocabulary
- b) sub-technical vocabulary

Technical vocabulary is specific vocabulary which is related to a particular field of study. Each field has its own technical vocabulary. Sub-technical vocabulary includes words or terms used across disciplines and, therefore, these words are less specific (Martin, 1976). A brief news item from *Far Eastern Economic Review* (August 11, 1983) can be used to illustrate the difference between technical and sub-technical vocabulary.

*THAILAND IS TO GET A NEW STANDBY CREDIT FACILITY*

*In what is seen as a precautionary step to cope with a widening current-account deficit this year, the Bank of Thailand, or BOT (the central bank) has given the mandate to five international banks to lead a US\$200 million eight-year syndicated standby credit facility. The latest programme, which is in addition to a similar but little-used US\$300 million facility signed in December 1981, comes amid official projections that the current-account deficit will expand from Baht 25.7 billion (US\$1.1 billion) in 1982 to Baht 40 billion this year in the face of higher imports as the current recovery picks up momentum.*

*The exceptionally favourable conditions of the new facility--including a record low interest rate of only 0.375 of a percentage point above the London inter-bank offered rate and a 0.25 of a percentage point annual commitment fee--underline Thailand's high international credit rating.*

In this news item, the technical vocabulary used includes the following : current-account, deficit and standby credit. The sub-technical vocabulary items used include : credit, rate, interest, rating and inter-bank.

In actual fact, although there are some specific vocabulary items we find that it is not too difficult to understand the piece. In the same way, the student himself may encounter technical words in a text which may be used and taught in other academic courses. Therefore, it is necessary that the student has the appropriate lexical knowledge to follow the text and read it without much difficulty (Judd, 1978). Therefore, it is worth teaching sub-technical vocabulary because it is essential and useful in language lessons.

In considering the EAP Reading course for Commerce and Accountancy students, the vocabulary can be classified into two groups :

1) *Technical vocabulary* This includes words used specifically in the business area, but not necessarily highly technical words, e.g.

barter  
broker  
commission  
del credere agents  
joint order  
laissez-faire  
retailer  
wholesaler

2) *Sub-technical vocabulary* This includes

a) words which are part of the every day language vocabulary of business (i.e. money and finance), e.g.

asset  
change  
check  
credit  
data  
expense  
loss  
receipt

b) words which are used frequently as part of the basic vocabulary of running a business, e.g.

to run  
to handle the goods  
to deal with/in  
to take title to  
to make a profit  
to operate  
to achieve profitability  
to put into effect  
to undertake  
to engender goodwill  
merchandise  
commodities  
turnover  
line  
in stock  
out of stock

The words in Group 1 are specific and technical though not highly technical. These words and their meanings are taught through Thai translations when the student follows his other academic courses. However, in the language classroom, it is still worth teaching some points connected with the kind of language, for example, spelling, pronunciation and structural patterns. The reason for this is that Thai students usually do not bother about how to pronounce these words correctly, so when they come across them in a reading passage, they usually think they are new words.

The words in Group 2 a and 2 b are less specific but more important in that they are used with high frequency and often across disciplines. The student may learn such words as to run, to undertake and to engender in other different contexts. It is worth teaching these words and having the student learn how to use them correctly in a business context.

#### **How to teach?**

In practice, we cannot provide the student with a store of vocabulary that will enable him to quickly comprehend everything he reads. This is due to time constraints in class and limits to the number of items the student is able to memorise. If we try to prepare the student for all the specific vocabulary need for all reading, we are sure to fail, and the student is sure to be frustrated and discouraged (Twaddell, 1973). The student himself should be made aware that he will constantly meet many words that he has never encountered before.

#### **Common practices in vocabulary teaching**

##### **DO**

1. Encourage the students to make sensible guesses as to the meanings of the words. Although guessing brings about vagueness, this is removed as they read or listen further (Twaddell, 1973).
2. Help the students to realise that they invariably know something about the context. There is nearly always some degree of familiarity. This is valuable in that by using this prior knowledge, the students can be ready to make a more accurate interpretation of what they read or listen to.

##### **DO NOT**

1. Do not encourage the students to resort to the dictionary in the first instance, since the meaning of the word will not stay with the students.
2. Do not supply word equivalents or translations in the first instance. This kind of help will almost certainly cause the students to quickly forget the meaning and does little to develop desirable habits of reading for comprehension (Twaddell, 1973).

3. Do not teach words in isolation but teach them within a correct context. Words taught in isolation are generally not retained. In addition, in order to grasp the full meaning of a word and phrase, the students must be aware of the linguistic environment in which the word or phrase appears (Judd, 1978).

Considering the existing materials used for the EAP Reading course we can see that Thai equivalents or translations are given for almost all difficult words. Especially in the "Words to Remember" section, which appears near the beginning of every teaching unit where a list of words is presented and the student is asked to remember them, as indeed the name of the section suggests.

**WORDS TO REMEMBER :** The following words all occur in this unit. The Thai meaning given for each word is the meaning it has in the text in this unit ; it may have other meanings as well.

<p><b>Nouns</b></p> <p>advantage : การได้เปรียบ</p> <p>branch : ด้าน ประเภท</p> <p>brand-name : ยี่ห้อ</p> <p>broker : นายหน้า ตัวแทน</p> <p>bulk : สินค้าท้ม ปริมาณมาก</p> <p>capital : ทุน</p> <p>commission : ค่านายหน้า</p> <p>commodities : โภคภัณฑ์ สินค้า</p> <p>consumer : ผู้บริโภค</p> <p>distribution : การจัดจำหน่าย</p> <p>enquiry : การสอบถาม</p> <p>expert : ผู้เชี่ยวชาญ</p> <p>expertise : ความชำนาญ พิเศษ</p> <p>line : ประเภทสินค้า</p> <p>manufacturer : ผู้ผลิต</p>	<p><b>Nouns</b></p> <p>merchant : พ่อค้า</p> <p>middleman : คนกลาง</p> <p>outlet : ตลาดหรือร้าน (ขายปลีก)</p> <p>period : ช่วง</p> <p>premises : อาคาร (และที่ดิน)</p> <p>produce : ผลผลิตทางการเกษตร</p> <p>producer : ผู้ผลิต</p> <p>retailer : ผู้ขายปลีก</p> <p>salesman : พนักงานขาย</p> <p>supply : อุปทาน</p> <p>turnover : ปริมาณการขายในแต่ละงวด</p> <p>variety : ประเภท</p> <p>ware-house : โกดังเก็บของ</p> <p><b>Verbs</b></p> <p>attract : ดึงดูด</p>	<p><b>Verbs</b></p> <p>benefit : ได้ประโยชน์</p> <p>cut out : ตัด</p> <p>deal in : ขาย</p> <p>dispense with : ไม่ต้องอาศัย</p> <p>employ :จ้าง</p> <p>induce : ชักนำ นำน้อม</p> <p>occupy : อยู่ในที่</p> <p>perform : กระทำ</p> <p>set : กำหนด</p> <p><b>Adjectives</b></p> <p>direct : โดยตรง</p> <p>large-scale : (ซึ่งขาย) เป็นจำนวนมาก</p> <p>prominent : เด่น สะดุดตา</p>
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It seems that this kind of word list would be most useful as a reference or as an index which the student could employ when he came to review the lesson. Thus, it is of little value as a means of introducing new vocabulary. The following exercises are an attempt to make better use of this word list and to help check and extend the student's knowledge of vocabulary.

**Example 1.**

Choose the items that can be used together with each verb. The number of possible answers is suggested in the parentheses.

- |  |                                 |
|--|---------------------------------|
| 1. to dispense with _____<br>_____ (2) | 4. to induce _____<br>_____ (2) |
| 2. to occupy _____<br>_____ (2)        | 5. to employ _____<br>_____ (3) |
| 3. to set _____<br>_____ (2)           | 6. to run _____<br>_____ (2)    |

- a) the wholesaler
- b) customers to buy goods
- c) the middleman
- d) his family business
- e) a prominent position
- f) expert buyers
- g) a small hotel efficiently
- h) the prices of goods
- i) a new secretary instead of doing everything by oneself
- j) an IBM typewriter
- k) him leader over the group
- l) the manager in setting up a new policy
- m) him to help us

Students do not only have to know the word but they also have to know about the word. They have to know the sort of vocabulary likely to be found associated with the word.<sup>1</sup>

**Example 2.**

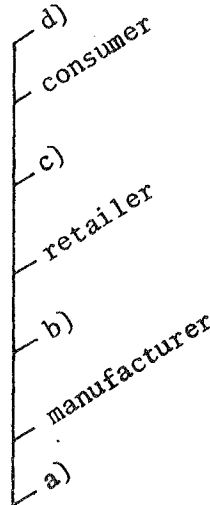
Here is a list of individuals and operators within the business field. They each have different roles and functions. Look at the following words:

middleman	consumer
manufacturer	wholesaler
retailer	salesman

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<sup>1</sup> adapted from Dorothy Brown's exercise presented in "Advanced Vocabulary Teaching" *RELC Journal*, 1974, 5, 2, 1-11.

1. Where would you add "wholesaler" to this diagram so as to complete it correctly?



2. Which word in the above list is most generally used to describe a person who acts as a link between a producer and a consumer?
- \_\_\_\_\_
3. Which words in the list are used to describe people whose work is related to the following places?

- a) a factory  
b) a warehouse  
c) a shop

Students need to know not only the meaning of each word, but also the concept of the word and the relationships between these people in business.

### Example 3.

For each word underlined, give as close a meaning as you can and write it in the space provided.

1. The holding of stock costs money; therefore, the wholesaler requires more capital than average retailer.

capital = \_\_\_\_\_

2. Expert buyers and sellers are required because they have knowledge of the commodities and the ability to assess their quality.

expert = \_\_\_\_\_

3. The retailer likes his shops to be located on an important shopping street because he hopes to attract casual passers-by.

attract = \_\_\_\_\_

4. Retailers can benefit from manufacturer's prices only if they have the capital to purchase, and space to store, commodities in *bulk*. However, most retailers' businesses are small and lack of these facilities.

bulk = \_\_\_\_\_

5. Whereas the premises of the retailer are the shop, those of the wholesaler are the *warehouse*.

warehouse = \_\_\_\_\_

6. Some wholesalers are responsible for organising the distribution of large *consumer* items, such as motor cars.

consumer = \_\_\_\_\_

7. In some cases, the wholesaler may *be dispensed with* by some manufacturers. That is to say, they do not continue to use him.

be dispensed with = \_\_\_\_\_

8. In preparing *commodities* for sale, sometimes the wholesaler packs, grades or labels the goods he buys before passing them on to the retailer.

commodities = \_\_\_\_\_

9. Wholesaling is an essential part of distribution which it is impossible to *cut out*.

cut out = \_\_\_\_\_

10. Sales agents work on *commission* basis.

commission = \_\_\_\_\_

This exercise is meant to give students practice with the most common kind of context clues. Teachers can help students to work out the meanings of these words by pointing out the discourse markers of	
cause/result	in Ss 1-3
contrast/concession	in Ss 4-5
exemplification/restatement	in Ss 6-7.
Moreover, the context clues can include	
definitions	in Ss 8-9 and
personal experience	in S 10.

#### Example 4

Put a (✓) or (×) in the blanks provided in the columns below : (✓) means usually associated with the term in the left-hand column, and (×) means not usually associated.



	large storage space	large amount of capital	credit terms offered	income earned by commission
wholesaler				
broker				
salesman				
retailer				

This exercise encourages students to develop their own sets of semantic features for given sets of words. It is also open to oral discussion.

### Conclusion

It is important that teachers should teach basic general vocabulary and words most frequently used in the specialities. Vocabulary exercises should not only help the student recognise familiar items but also help him extend his knowledge to include unfamiliar items. Teachers should also encourage the student to practice using the words, since the greater is the exposure to the words, the greater is the chance of retention. In this way, it is hoped that the atmosphere of the EFL classroom will be improved and the practical use of English outside classroom will be enhanced.

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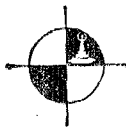
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