

## *Original Paper*

# The Effectiveness of a Structural-cum-Communicative Approach to Vocabulary Teaching

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### **Abstract**

*This study aims to investigate the effectiveness of a structural-cum-communicative approach to the teaching of vocabulary to students possessing a low level of English proficiency. A total of 52 foundation degree students taking a 13-week preparatory reading and writing course participated in the present study. Both the control and the experimental groups took a pre-test and a post-test. The pre-test contained two parts, each of which included 25 words and a list of 25 definitions for students to select. The same format applied to the post-test. Both groups of participants were taught word-formation knowledge at the initial stage. However, at the later stage of actually teaching target words, the experimental group was engaged in brief conversations on topics related to their daily life with respect to the target words while the control group was provided with explanations only in the teaching process.*

*Paired Samples T-Tests show that only the experimental group scored significantly higher on the post-test than on the pre-test. The findings suggest that the teaching of word-formation knowledge as well as engaging students in conversations related to the target words seems to constitute an effective pedagogical approach to vocabulary building for students possessing a low level of English proficiency.*

### **Keywords**

*Vocabulary teaching, explicit vocabulary, knowledge of word formation, communicative approach*

## **1. Introduction**

### *1.1 Rationale for the Present Study*

Whether students studying at tertiary institutions need to be taught vocabulary has been a topic of interest for many teaching practitioners. Grabe (2009) argues that vocabulary should be taught on the grounds that a student's vocabulary typically accounts for 50% of learners' listening or reading test scores or even at a higher percentage. Sonbul and Schmitt (2009) further state that deliberate teacher instructions are essential for L2 learners to acquire functional vocabulary. Contrary to some teachers' belief that explicit

teaching is essential, many university language teachers hold a different view. Some teachers believe that valuable class time should not be spent on teaching vocabulary based on the belief that vocabulary development can be left to students for self-study (Nation, 2013). Horst (2014) states that many teachers tend to use class time for teaching grammar, assuming that students will have sufficient exposure to at least some high frequency words. As a result of the rapid technological development on the Internet, there is an abundance of free Internet resources accessible to students 24 hours a day for vocabulary development outside of class, for example, online dictionaries, vocabulary learning websites and corpus-based materials, e.g., Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), whether or not students use computers or their mobile phones. As such, some teachers may think that they can be relieved of the responsibility to teach vocabulary in a classroom.

Apart from the debate about the necessity of explicit vocabulary teaching in class, it has also been the research focus of many teaching practitioners to investigate the challenges facing language teachers in their endeavor to enhance the vocabulary knowledge of language learners possessing a low level of English proficiency. The challenges are multi-faceted. First, these students often have a narrow range of vocabulary, which probably contributes to their difficulty in understanding teachers' explanations of new words using the target language. Second, it is a common occurrence that the knowledge of word formation in the English language is not covered in many of the secondary schools in Hong Kong although the importance of vocabulary development has been highlighted frequently in secondary schools in Hong Kong (Choi & Ma, 2015; Chung, 2018; Tang et al., 2016). Third, many teachers do not seem to have a repertoire of effective vocabulary-teaching skills. Chung's (2018) study, which involved four in-service ESL teachers in Hong Kong, concluded that the four teacher participants relied on a limited range of vocabulary-learning strategies, which included relying on memory and guessing strategies. There was no mentioning of social or metacognitive strategies used in the reflections of the four teachers. Chung (2018) also found that the four teachers doubted their own ability of helping students to develop their vocabulary. Similarly, Dronjic (2019) states that teachers often consider themselves to be lacking in knowledge of how to teach vocabulary in a "principled, evidence-based way sensitive to students' needs" (p. 29). The fourth issue concerns the lack of motivation on the part of language learners with low English proficiency to improve their vocabulary knowledge both inside and outside of class. Probably, because of the deficiency in knowledge on word formation and other vocabulary-learning strategies, these students, after entering university, may find it hard to memorize the meaning of a new word, which might in turn decrease their motivation to further expand their vocabulary. The second possible contributing factor in students' lack of motivation to build their vocabulary knowledge might be the heavy academic workload of their undergraduate study. These possible challenges might result in comparatively small amounts of time devoted to vocabulary teaching in class and vocabulary development on the part of learners. However, there is in fact a high lexical demand on students pursuing tertiary education (Crossman, 2018). With such a high lexical demand, it would be interesting to investigate learners' views on whether explicit teaching of vocabulary in a language

classroom is essential. Paker and Özcan's (2017) study revealed that the participants in their study had positive attitudes towards the use of corpus-based materials in class. Yet, the integration of corpus-based materials and the course syllabus does not seem to be the pre-dominant mode of teaching in the secondary and tertiary institutions in Hong Kong, where class teachers' explanations of target words appear to be the norm, at least at the initial stage of teaching. After the explanations of target words, class teachers often leave the task of memorizing or using the words to students. To the best knowledge of the present researcher, there has been little research investigating the views of tertiary students possessing a low level of English proficiency, especially those in Hong Kong, about the pedagogical effectiveness of the approach adopted by their class teacher when introducing target words; there has also been little research into the usefulness of a structural-cum-communicative approach, in which students are first taught the knowledge of word formation of a target word and then are encouraged to engage in brief conversations with the class teacher on daily topics related to the target word, in terms of enhancing students' word retention in the Hong Kong setting. As such, the present study aims to add to the body of literature in these regards. Specifically, the present research intends to investigate the following two questions:

- 1) How effective is it to teach word-formation knowledge and to engage native Cantonese-speaking students possessing a low level of English proficiency in conversations involving the target words in terms of improving word retention?
- 2) What are these students' views on the usefulness of the structural-cum-communicative approach to vocabulary teaching?

### *1.2 Literature Review*

Vocabulary development among ESL learners can be classified into indirect and direct approaches in general. An indirect approach finds support from *Input Hypothesis* (Krashen, 1985), which states that when the language input is slightly more advanced in proficiency level than that of a learner, language acquisition of the learner is likely to occur. *Input* refers to the exposure to authentic language in use from various sources, including teachers, other learners, and the environment around the learners. Nation (1982) states that incidental learning, where language is used for communication and does not focus exclusively on teaching new words in the text, can take place while one is listening or reading. On the other hand, a direct approach, which is a conscious process, refers to explicit, systematic instructions (Choo, Tan, & Pandian, 2012; Ellis, 1994). Naeimi and Foo (2015) found that direct strategies resulted in higher achievement of vocabulary storage than indirect strategies did for pre-intermediate level at university. Capellini (2010) reported that children with low English proficiency benefited more from explicit vocabulary instruction. The explicit vocabulary instructions used in Capellini's (2010) study included the teaching of targeted words with 1) contextual and definitional information; 2) multiple exposures to targeted words in varied contexts; 3) the discussion of words related to students' experiences; and 4) structured activities that actively involve and engage students, e.g., comparing/contrasting words and connecting the words to students' background knowledge. Kaivanpanah, Akbarian and Salimi (2021) found that the learners in their study receiving explicit as well as modified-implicit activities

outperformed those exposed to implicit instruction on vocabulary tests. The result of Manyak and Manyak's (2021) study indicated significant growth of the primary students' general vocabulary knowledge in each of the three years in their study as a result of explicit teaching of words.

Research studies on explicit teaching of vocabulary have revealed various issues with respect to vocabulary teaching and learning. For example, duration of word retention has been found to be a function of the quality of processing, i.e., teachers' elaboration on aspects of target words and amount of rehearsal (Hulstijn, 2001). The effectiveness of vocabulary teaching also depends on whether the teaching outcome is measured by the breadth or depth of vocabulary teaching. Breadth of vocabulary teaching refers to the number of words a person understands and a surface-level knowledge of the words while depth of vocabulary teaching refers to learners' understanding of various aspects of a given word, including register, morphological, syntactic, and collocational elements (Miao & Kirby, 2015). A more recent area of interest with respect to vocabulary teaching concerns the input spacing effect. Rogers and Cheung (2020) found better learning outcome for vocabulary items presented under the spaced-short format (i.e., 1-day interval) than those presented under the spaced-long format (i.e., 8-day interval). Vincy (2020) pointed out that only the experimental group, which was taught through explicit vocabulary and repeated exposure to target words using supplementary teaching materials created for the experimental group, showed a significant increase in the scores measuring receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge. Vincy (2020) believes that vocabulary development progresses along a continuum from reception to production rather than being measured on a dichotomy of all or nothing.

To address various issues involving the learning of vocabulary by second language learners, vocabulary researchers over the years have made various pedagogical suggestions. For example, Nation (2001) proposed four strands in balanced vocabulary learning: comprehensible meaning-focused input; form-focused instruction; meaning-focused output; and fluency development. Nation (2001) also considered context crucial for teaching vocabulary. Productive tasks (e.g., sentence making) was found to be an effective tool for the learning of vocabulary (Webb, 2005). Webb (2007) further concluded that some learning could occur after 10 repetitions in context, but full knowledge of a word would take more than 10 repetitions. Laufer (2009) made suggestions along the same line concerning the quality of elaboration of word information and task involvement (e.g., engaging word-focused activities; and frequent rehearsals). Zhang (2009) proposed four tentative solutions to the limited vocabulary knowledge among L2 learners: 1) raising EFL learners' awareness of vocabulary learning; 2) developing learners' productive vocabulary by using target words in authentic contexts; 3) fostering learners' awareness of using appropriate learning strategies; and 4) using both intentional (direct) and incidental (indirect) approaches. Ellis (2001) conceptualized the term "form-focused instructions" and described three types of form-focused instructions based on whether an instruction primarily focuses on form, on meaning or whether the attention to the form of a target structure is intensive or extensive. Ismaiel and Asmari (2017) recommended more vocabulary tactics like context clues, parts of word (e.g., prefixes, roots). Morphology awareness was also pinpointed to be useful in assisting writers to increase productive

vocabulary (McCutchen & Stull, 2015). Asaad and Shabdin (2021) observed that morphological awareness significantly correlated with academic writing, helping students to produce texts and convey ideas meaningfully. Vincy (2020) built in such elements in the supplementary teaching materials developed for the experimental group as contextual introduction of the target vocabulary; focusing on the form; pictorial representation of the meaning of the target word; most frequent derivatives of the word; and creating a means for emotional association with the word meaning.

### *1.3 Background of the Participants and the Course*

The participants in this study included a total of four classes of students taking the course “English Foundation Course for Associate Degree Students (EL0009)”, or “EFCAD”, which was offered by the English Language Centre (ELC) at the City University of Hong Kong in the first semester 2018-19 as a preparatory course. The maximum class size was 25 students. The 39-hour course covered academic reading and writing skills, spanning thirteen weeks with each lesson lasting 3 hours.

According to the course requirements of the ELC, students scoring Level 2 in the subject of the English Language in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) were required to take this English foundation course. After completing this course, the students were required to take two more subsequent courses: “English Enhancement Course for Associate Degree Students I (EECAD I)” and “English Enhancement Course for Associate Degree Students II (EECAD II)”, each lasting 39 hours.

## **2. Methods**

### *2.1 Participants*

The two classes taught by the present researcher formed the experimental group, while the two classes taught by another teacher in the ELC constituted the control group. For the experimental group comprising 41 students, 26 sets of pre-test and post-test scripts were collected. A total of 15 students in the experimental groups were absent from the pre-test and/or the post-test, so only 26 sets of usable data completed by the same students for the pre- and post- tests were obtained. To match the size of the experimental group, 26 sets of pre-test and post-test scripts completed by the same students were randomly selected from the 30 sets of usable scripts from the control group (Table 1).

**Table 1. Grouping and Number of Scripts**

	Experimental Group	Control Group
Number of classes	2	2
Total number of sets of scripts used for data analysis	26	26

## 2.2 Research Tools

The research tools included two vocabulary quizzes and a questionnaire, which was used to collect student's views on the structural-cum-communicative approach of vocabulary teaching. The first vocabulary quiz, serving as the pre-test, was administered in Lesson 4 before the topic of word formation was taught to students in Lesson 5. The pre-test comprised 50 words taken from two units of the course book, which included a total of twelve units. In Part 1 of the quiz, students were asked to match the 25 words provided in the task to the 25 definitions provided in a list; Part 2 of the pre-test quiz also included a matching exercise involving another 25 target words (Appendix A). The reason for the separation of the 50 target words into two exercises was that matching 50 words with 50 definitions in one single exercise might render the matching task unmanageable for some participants. The post-test, completed in Lesson 13, included the same 50 words tested in the same format as the pre-test—that is, matching target words with the definitions provided in two separate exercises, each of which containing 25 words (Appendix B). To ensure the reliability of the tests, the following measures were adopted: the order of the 25 words in both Part 1 and Part 2 was altered; the answers to the pre-test were not released to students after the pre-test; and the students were not allowed to keep the pre-test question papers.

There was a time gap of seven weeks between the pre- and the post- tests; there was a time gap of four weeks between the last vocabulary teaching lesson and the post-test (see Appendix C for the course map). The questionnaire was completed in the last lesson of a reading group, which was also taught by the present researcher, but the students came from different classes of the reading and writing course. The reading group was smaller in class size than the regular Foundation reading and writing course for the purpose of facilitating greater teacher-student and student-student interaction. The allocation of Foundation Degree students to a certain reading group was based on students' availability for a timeslot in which a reading group was held for the entire semester. The questionnaire was not distributed to the original experimental group for two reasons: 1) some of the class time was already used for the post-test in the last lesson of the experimental group. Too many additional tasks might cause negative responses to students; and 2) the structural-cum-communicative approach was also adopted in the reading group conducted by the present researcher. Eighteen students were present in the last lesson of that reading group. The questionnaire included a total of ten questions, eight of which were about the participants' perception of the structural-cum-communicative approach to teaching vocabulary in the following aspects: 1) the usefulness of listening to the class teacher's examples illustrating the use of a target word; 2) the usefulness of the brief conversations with the class teacher on topics related to target words; 3) the importance of improving one's vocabulary knowledge; and 4) the necessity of explicit vocabulary teaching at the tertiary level. Questions 8 and 9, concerning the students' preference for the story book designated as the source reading for the entire course, were not directly related to the purposes of this present research study, so the findings of these two questions will not be reported in the following Results section. See Appendix D for the sample of the questionnaire.

### 2.3 Treatment 1

Both the control and experimental groups were taught with the same teaching materials—that is, Unit 5 (“Guessing the meaning of unknown words”) and Unit 7 (“Signposting”) of the Student Course Book. Unit 5 covered knowledge concerning word formation such as roots, prefixes, suffixes, detecting context clues (restatements or definitions; positive association of ideas; negative association of ideas; relationship signals; cohesive repetition).

Unit 5 started with an inductive approach, in which students were required to guess the meanings of roots based on some examples of words containing the roots. See the example below:

immortal (a person or thing which cannot die)

mortuary (a building where bodies are stored until burial)

postmortem (a surgery done to determine the cause of death)

The root is \_\_\_\_\_. Its meaning is \_\_\_\_\_

The second section of Unit 5 was organized using a deductive approach, in which students were first provided with a list of roots with example words, e.g. *auto*; *anti*; *aud*; *bene*; *mal*; *pod*; *tri*. Subsequently, students practiced the target roots in fill-in-the-blank exercises by referring to the list. See examples of the exercises below:

Exercises to practice the target roots:

A *tripod* is a device with \_\_\_\_\_ for holding a camera.

If you have *antipathy* towards someone, you have a strong \_\_\_\_\_ them.

In essence, Unit 5 covered word formation knowledge as well as some target words to be included in the two vocabulary quizzes. The remaining target words appearing in the two quizzes were taken from the two readings passages in Unit 7.

### 2.4 Treatment 2

The experimental group was subjected to another treatment—that is, students were engaged in brief conversations with their class teacher related to the target words while the control group did not have this type of conversation as a class activity. To illustrate Treatment 2, two teaching examples are provided below when the target words “hydrant” and “strategies” were taught:

“HYDRANT”

Step 1: Teacher explains the meaning of “hydrant” in the sentence appearing in the passage in the course book.

Step 2: Teacher asks a student a question including the target word, e.g., “What is the color of a hydrant in HK?”

Step 3: Teacher asks further questions like “What are the colors of hydrants in other countries?”

“STRATEGIES”

Step 1: Teacher explains the meaning of “strategies” in the sentence appearing in the passage in the course book. Teacher also tells students some interesting strategies adopted by people to solve some problems, e.g., how to release stress.

Step 2: Teacher asks a student a question involving the target word, e.g., “What are your strategies for dealing with stress before an important exam?”

Step 3: Teacher asks further questions like “Do you know the examination strategies of some students who score very high GPAs?”

### 2.5 Method of Data Analysis

The mean scores of the pre-test and post-test of the same group were analyzed using Paired-Samples T-Test of IBM SPSS Statistics 25.

Questionnaire findings were analyzed using frequency counts. Open-ended questions were subjected to manual qualitative analysis.

## 3. Results

Table 2 shows the mean scores of the pre-test and post-test of both the experimental and control groups.

**Table 2. Mean Scores of the Pre-test and Post-test of Both the Experimental and Control Groups**

		Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Paired-Sample T-Test Sig. (2-tailed)
Experimental group	Pre-test score	5.15	2.664	-3.932	25	0.001 (Significant at $p \leq 0.05$ )
	Post-test score	7.35	3.857			
Control Group	Pre-test score	4.08	2.244	-0.464	25	0.646
	Post-test score	4.15	2.444			

As can be seen in Table 2, the mean score of the post-test ( $M=7.35$ ;  $SD=3.857$ ) of the experimental group was significantly higher ( $t=-3.932$ ,  $df=25$ ; 2-tailed  $p=0.001$ ) than that of the pre-test ( $M=5.15$ ;  $SD=2.664$ ) at  $p \leq 0.05$ . However, there was no significant difference between the pre- and post- test for the control group at  $p \leq 0.05$ .

The findings derived from Table 2 seem to suggest that the structural-cum-communicative approach to vocabulary teaching has benefited the participants in this study. It was found that the participants in the experimental group were able to remember significantly more target words in the post-test than did in the pre-test.

**Table 3. Questionnaire Findings**

N=18

Questionnaire questions	Strongly disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Sum of “Agree and Strongly agree”	
				Agree (%)	Strongly agree (%)
Q.1 Listening to T’s explanations helps me understand the meaning	0	0	11.10	<b>88.9</b> 77.8	11.10
Q.2 Listening to T’s explanations helps me remember the word meaning	0	5.60	16.70	<b>77.8</b> 55.60	22.20
Q. 3 Answering T’s questions can help me understand the word meaning	0	0	16.70	<b>83.3</b> 66.70	16.60
Q.4 Answering T’s questions helps me remember the word meaning	0	0	33.30	<b>66.7</b> 50.00	16.70
Q.5 I need T’s explanations to learn vocabulary	0	0	33.3	<b>66.7</b> 55.60	11.10

Q.6 I need class activities to help me remember the word meaning	0	0	27.8	<b>61.1</b>
			50.00	11.10
Q.7 It is very important for a student to expand their vocab range	5.60	11.10	16.70	<b>66.6</b>
			44.40	22.20

Table 3 above shows four major findings indicated by the sums of the percentages of participants choosing “Agree” and “Strongly Agree”:

- 1) Listening to the class teacher’s explanations was considered by the majority of the participants (88.9%) to be useful to help students understand the meanings of target words;
- 2) Answering the class teacher’s questions was considered by the majority of the participants (83.3%) to be useful to help students understand the meanings of target words. As far as *remembering* the meanings of words, the percentages of students finding listening to the teacher’s explanations and answering the teacher’s questions helpful are slightly lower than those about *understanding* the meanings of words (77.8% and 66.7% respectively);
- 3) More than half of the participants agreed that they needed the teacher’s explanations (66.7%) and class activities (66.15%) to learn vocabulary; and
- 4) More than half of the participants (66.6%) agreed that it was very important for students to expand their vocabulary range.

**Table 4. Students’ Preferences for the Use of Class Time for Vocabulary Teaching**

N=18

	Yes	No
Q.10 Do you prefer or not prefer your teacher to spend some time in class teaching vocabulary?	15 (83.3%)	3 (16.7%)

Table 4 above shows that the majority of the participants (83.3%) preferred their class teacher to spend some time in class teaching vocabulary.

Questionnaire findings reveal the participants' support for classroom vocabulary teaching and for the use of the communicative approach to improve their ability to understand as well as remember the meanings of target vocabulary.

#### 4. Discussion

The present study aims to investigate the effectiveness of a structural-cum-communicative approach on the learning of vocabulary among students who possess a low level of English proficiency and who learn English as a second language at the City University of Hong Kong. Based on the findings, a tentative conclusion is that it is probably useful to teach students possessing a low level of English proficiency the knowledge of word formation and to engage them in brief conversations related to their daily life using the topics centering on the target words. Specifically, it was found that the mean of post-test scores of the experimental group was significantly higher than that of the pre-test scores at  $p \leq 0.05$ , while the control group did not show any significant difference between the two tests. The results seem to show that structural-cum-communicative approach has benefited the participants in the experimental group in terms of memorizing the meanings of the 50 target words when asked to match the target words with the definitions provided in a list. The findings of this present study is in alignment with Capelline's (2010) finding that using target words to discuss life experience with learners possessing low English proficiency would benefit them. The second major finding of this present study that imparting knowledge about word formation had a positive effect on the retention of word meanings also echoes the findings of some studies. For example, McCutchen and Stull (2015) concluded that morphology awareness was useful in assisting writers to increase productive vocabulary; [Asaad](#) and [Shabdin](#) (2021) drew the conclusion that morphological awareness significantly correlated with academic writing.

Some might think that although the participants were new to the course, there existed a possibility that some participants had already known some of the words before joining the course, thus weakening the tentative conclusion of this present study that the structural-cum-communicative approach adopted in the course might have led to the increase in the post-test scores. Yet, it should be noted that the pre-test and post-test were completed by the same students, meaning that knowing a word before being taught by the structural-cum-communicative approach would not help boost the difference between a student's pre- and post-test scores.

The questionnaire findings of this present study show that the majority of the questionnaire respondents found the explanations provided by the class teacher as well as the conversations involving target words useful in helping them *understand* and *remember* the meanings of the target words. Yet, there were fewer respondents who considered the communicative approach useful in improving their ability to *remember* the meanings of target words than those who found the communication approach useful in helping them *understand* the meanings of target words. This might be because the success in remembering a word is likely to require more exposure to the target word over a longer period of time than one single encounter in one single lesson. This speculation gains support from Webb's (2007) finding that some learning could

occur after 10 repetitions in context, but full knowledge of a word would take more than 10 repetitions. The teaching instructions in Capelline's (2010) study also included multiple exposures to targeted words in varied contexts. The last major finding derived from this present study is that the majority of the participants considered the use of class time to teach vocabulary necessary.

There exist several limitations in this present study. First, the sample size was small—only 26 sets of pre- and post- test scripts, and only 18 questionnaire respondents. Second, the two vocabulary quizzes measured only the receptive side of vocabulary development rather than the productive use of words. Third, the two vocabulary quizzes only focused on the breadth of words instead of depth of words.

Several recommendations are made for teaching practitioners and future researchers. First, engaging students in brief conversations about their daily life using the target words seems to be a useful teaching method, which does not need much preparation on the teachers' part yet seems to help build rapport with students by shortening the social distance between a class teacher and his/her students. Second, the teaching of word formation such as prefixes, suffixes and roots seems to deserve the use of class time. Third, future researchers might conduct a pilot test of the pre-test in order to remove those words that the participants have already known because students' prior knowledge of such words are likely to blur the findings concerning the effectiveness of a teaching intervention. The fourth recommendation is to involve students possessing a higher level of English proficiency. It would be interesting to investigate the preference of these students for teaching vocabulary in class because linguistically able students may prefer to develop their vocabulary knowledge by making use of online resources on their own. Fifth, future researchers might examine the effects of the structural-cum-communicative approach on both the receptive and productive use of words. It remains a challenge whether the approach adopted in this present study would also help improve students' active use of target words in addition to the possible improvement in the retention of target vocabulary. Based on the findings of the present study, a tentative conclusion is that it is probably useful to teach students possessing a low level of English proficiency the knowledge of word formation and to engage them in brief conversations related to their daily life using the topics centering on the target words.

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## Appendix A Pre-test

**EXERCISE 1: Do you know the meanings of the following words? Match the words with the correct meanings. Put the correct letter in the box located to the right of the word.**

philosophy		ethical		acquire	
strategies		drenched		obesity	
intellectual		offspring		quadruple	
maladies		paramount		upsurge	
autonomous		unprecedented		kin	
cardiology		arteries		lethal	
coronary		component		rhythm	
punched		frustrated		ripe	
obsessed					

- a. the study of the nature and meaning of existence, truth, good and evil etc
- b. relating to the ability to understand things and think intelligently
- c. covered with a lot of a liquid
- d. an illness
- e. more important than anything else
- f. increase and become four times as big or as high
- g. your family
- h. one of the tubes that carries blood from your heart to the rest of your body
- i. free to govern or control itself
- j. a plan or series of plans for achieving an aim, especially success in business or the best way for an organization to develop in the future
- k. the medical study of the heart
- l. obtain something by buying it or being given it
- m. relating to principles of what is right and wrong
- n. when someone is very fat in a way that is unhealthy
- o. think or worry about something all the time and you cannot think about anything else
- p. a sudden increase
- q. someone's child or children
- r. never having happened before, or never having happened so much
- s. causing death, or able to cause death
- t. feeling annoyed, upset, and impatient, because you cannot control or change a situation, or achieve something
- u. relating to the heart

- v. fully grown and ready to eat
- w. a regular repeated pattern of sounds or movements
- x. one of several parts that together make up a whole machine, system
- y. hit someone or something hard with your fist

**EXERCISE 2: Do you know the meanings of the following words? Match the words with the correct meanings. Put the correct letter in the box located to the right of the word.**

perception		evolve		consent	
unconscious		funerals		contravene	
respiration		extravagance		haphazard	
allowance		apparent		lucrative	
loiter		adjourn to		prohibit	
abundance		etiquette		sacrifice	
shocking		auditoriums		minute	
infrastructure		lavish		imprint	
pervasive					

- a. the process of breathing
- b. finish an activity and go somewhere
- c. a job or activity that is lucrative lets you earn a lot of money
- d. the part of a theatre where people sit when watching a play, concert etc
- e. existing everywhere
- f. very surprising, upsetting, and difficult to believe
- g. large, impressive, or expensive
- h. easy to notice
- i. a religious ceremony for burying or cremating (=burning) someone who has died
- j. when you decide not to have something valuable, in order to get something that is more important
- k. spending or costing a lot of money, especially more than is necessary or more than you can afford
- l. change gradually over a long period of time
- m. the way you think about something and your idea of what it is like
- n. unable to see, move, feel etc in the normal way because you have lost your senses
- o. an amount of money that you are given regularly or for a special purpose
- p. the basic systems and structures that a country or organization needs in order to work properly, for example roads, railways, banks etc

- q. the formal rules for polite behaviour in society or in a particular group
- r. permission to do something
- s. a large quantity of something
- t. happening or done in a way that is not planned or organized
- u. stand or wait somewhere, especially in a public place, without any clear reason
- v. print or press the mark of an object on something
- w. do something that is not allowed according to a law or rule
- x. extremely small
- y. say that an action is illegal or not allowed

### Appendix B Post-test

**EXERCISE 1: Do you know the meanings of the following words? Match the words with the correct meanings. Put the correct letter in the box to the right of the word.**

intellectual		offspring		obsessed	
maladies		paramount		upsurge	
philosophy		ethical		acquire	
strategies		drenched		obesity	
coronary		Caucasians		rhythm	
punched		frustrated		ripe	
autonomous		unprecedented		kin	
cardiology		arteries		lethal	
quadruple					

- a. the study of the nature and meaning of existence, truth, good and evil etc.
- b. relating to the ability to understand things and think intelligently
- c. covered with a lot of a liquid
- d. an illness
- e. more important than anything else
- f. increase and become four times as big or as high
- g. your family
- h. one of the tubes that carries blood from your heart to the rest of your body
- i. free to govern or control itself

- j. a plan or series of plans for achieving an aim, especially success in business or the best way for an organization to develop in the future
- k. the medical study of the heart
- l. obtain something by buying it or being given it
- m. relating to principles of what is right and wrong
- n. when someone is very fat in a way that is unhealthy
- o. think or worry about something all the time and you cannot think about anything else
- p. a sudden increase
- q. someone's child or children
- r. never having happened before, or never having happened so much
- s. causing death, or able to cause death
- t. feeling annoyed, upset, and impatient, because you cannot control or change a situation, or achieve something
- u. relating to the heart
- v. fully grown and ready to eat
- w. a regular repeated pattern of sounds or movements
- x. a member of the race of people with white or pale skin
- y. hit someone or something hard with your fist

**EXERCISE 2: Do you know the meaning of the following words? Match the words with the correct meaning. Put the correct letter in the box to the right of the word.**

respiration		extravagance		pervasive	
allowance		apparent		lucrative	
perception		evolve		consent	
unconscious		funerals		contravene	
shocking		auditoriums		minute	
infrastructure		lavish		imprint	
loiter		adjourn to		prohibit	
abundance		etiquette		sacrifice	
haphazard					

- a. the process of breathing
- b. Finish an activity and go somewhere
- c. a job or activity that is lucrative lets you earn a lot of money
- d. the part of a theatre where people sit when watching a play, concert etc.
- e. existing everywhere
- f. very surprising, upsetting, and difficult to believe
- g. large, impressive, or expensive
- h. easy to notice
- i. a religious ceremony for burying or cremating (=burning) someone who has died
- j. when you decide not to have something valuable, in order to get something that is more important
- k. spending or costing a lot of money, especially more than is necessary or more than you can afford
- l. change gradually over a long period of time
- m. the way you think about something and your idea of what it is like
- n. unable to see, move, feel etc in the normal way because you have lost your senses
- o. an amount of money that you are given regularly or for a special purpose
- p. the basic systems and structures that a country or organization needs in order to work properly, for example roads, railways, banks etc
- q. the formal rules for polite behaviour in society or in a particular group
- r. permission to do something
- s. a large quantity of something
- t. happening or done in a way that is not planned or organized
- u. stand or wait somewhere, especially in a public place, without any clear reason
- v. print or press the mark of an object on something
- w. do something that is not allowed according to a law or rule
- x. extremely small
- y. say that an action is illegal or not allowed

### Appendix C Course Map

- Unit 1: Getting to know you and Introduction to Reading (Lessons 1 and 2)
- Unit 2: Reading Skills and Strategies (skimming and scanning) (Lesson 3)
- Unit 3: Text genres (Lesson 4)
- Unit 4: From note-taking to note-making (Lesson 5) [**Pre-test completed**]
- Unit 5: Guessing the meaning of unknown words (Lesson 6)
- Unit 6: Paragraph Writing (Lesson 7)
- Unit 7: Signposting (Lesson 8) [**Last teaching unit on vocabulary knowledge**]
- Unit 8: Teenage gangs (Ellipsis, reference words and repetition) (Lesson 9)
- Unit 9: Organizing argumentative essays (Lesson 10)

- Unit 10: Writing argumentative essays (Lesson 11)
- Unit 11: Mobile Communications (Lesson 12)
- Unit 12: Rich and Poor (Lesson 13) [**Post-test completed**]

#### Appendix D Questionnaire

# RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE VOCABULARY BUILDING

Dear EFCAD Students,

You are cordially invited to participate in a research study investigating the effectiveness of teaching vocabulary in class. Hopefully, the findings can contribute to the teaching of vocabulary in the future. Students' responses elicited in the questionnaire will be analyzed collectively and anonymously. No individuals will be identified in the report of findings. I would be happy to share the findings with you when they are ready upon your request.

Read the questions below and indicate your opinion by circling the appropriate number:

**1=Totally disagree 3=Neutral 5=Totally agree**

<p>1) <b>Listening to Teacher's explanations</b> of the meanings of words together with examples help me <b>understand</b> the meanings of words well.</p>	1	2	3	4	5
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- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2) <b>Listening to Teacher’s explanations</b> of the meanings of words together with examples help me <b>remember</b> the meanings of words well. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3) <b>Answering Teacher’s questions</b> relating to students’ daily life experience helps me <b>understand</b> the meanings of words well.        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4) <b>Answering Teacher’s questions</b> relating to students’ daily life experience helps me <b>remember</b> the meanings of words well.          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5) I need <b>Teacher’s explanations</b> to understand the meanings of new words.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6) I need <b>class activities</b> to help me remember the words after Teacher’s explanations.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7) It is very important for a student to expand their vocabulary range.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8) Reading a story book is a useful method to learn more words.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9) I like the story book “Diamond Hill” used in Reading Groups.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

**10. Your way of learning vocab**

**a) Do you prefer or not prefer your teacher to spend some time in class to teach vocabulary?**

- Some class time should be used to teach vocabulary.
- Class time should not be used for teaching vocabulary.
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**b) What types of vocabulary activities (e.g., making sentences, spelling a word) can work for you in your learning experience so far?**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**THANK YOU!**

*The following personal information will help me interpret the findings from this study. I would be grateful if you could complete this part of the questionnaire as well.*

**Gender:** Male \_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_

**Date of Birth:** \_\_\_\_\_  
(Month) (Year)

**Your first language:** \_\_\_\_\_

If you speak Chinese as your first language, please specify the variety of Chinese you speak (e.g., Cantonese, Hakka, Mandarin): \_\_\_\_\_

**Major/program:** \_\_\_\_\_

**City where you received your secondary education:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Grade in the Use of English in  HKDSE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Year obtaining the exam results:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name(s) of other English proficiency test(s) taken (E.g. IELTS):**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Exam results:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Year obtaining the exam results:** \_\_\_\_\_

**THANK YOU!**