

32 Dimensions of a Lexical Item

Scrivener, J. (2005). *Learning teaching: The essential guide to English language teaching*. Oxford, ENG: Macmillan Education (pp.247-249)

#	Item	Notes
1	Phonemes	Pronunciation
2	Number of syllables	For the sake of pronunciation; rarely needed for writing via word processing
3	Which syllables are stressed	Short words have one main stress; longer words may have a number of secondary stresses
4	Spelling	Standard orthography
5	Which syllables are weaker or stronger	This helps with sentence prosody
6	Homonyms	Words with the same spelling but different meaning (bear=to carry/an animal)
7	Homophones	Words that are pronounced the same but have different meanings (bear/bare)
8	The basic "core" meaning(s)	Straightforward dictionary meanings
9	Other meanings	"Fuzzy" meanings, inferences from context
10	The "semantic space" it occupies	Semantic boundaries: Where the meaning of the word ends and other words' meanings begin (fence, hedge, wall)
11	Restrictions on meaning	Colloquial meanings versus standard meanings. Ex., "belongings" versus "stuff" versus "junk"; Ex., the meaning of "hook up with"
12	Connotation	Associations and feelings attached to words apart from their literal, "dictionary" meanings; "junkie" has a more negative connotation than "drug user", "illegal alien" than "undocumented immigrant"
13	Metaphorical meanings	E.g., the uses of "water" words to talk about business: <i>cash flow, drowning in debt, liquidity</i>
14	Common chunks/phrases/idioms it appears in	Especially helpful for commonly used phrases; full-blown idioms should not be the focus of vocabulary instruction
15	Lexical families	Words related to other words by topic (pan, skillet, mixer, sauté)
16	Lexical sets	Words related to other words more broadly or more narrowly (sweater/clothes/wardrobe) [broader]; (pullover/V-neck) [narrower]
17	Synonyms	Words with the same or nearly the same meaning
18	Antonyms	Words with the opposite or nearly the opposite meaning
19	Translation(s)	Word meanings do not always translate across languages (e.g. "self" in Japanese has translations closer to meanings of "selfish" or "egotistical")
20	False cognates	Words that in translation have dissimilar meanings or connotations (<i>embarrassed</i> in English versus <i>embarazada</i> [pregnant] in Spanish)
21	True cognates	Words that mean almost precisely the same in translation
22	What part of speech it is	Help with affiliations across other parts of speech
23	Grammatically related forms	E.g., different parts of speech, verb tense forms
24	Prefixes that can be added to the word	Ex., flow, overflow (2 free morphemes = compound word); determine, predetermine (pre-is a bound morpheme prefix)
25	Suffixes that can be added to the word	E.g., possess, possession (also might mention infixes, such as mother-in-law/mothers-in-law)
26	Immediate collocates	Words that typically are found with the word (most common)
27	Collocational field	Words that possibly are found with the word (possibilities)
28	Colligation (grammatical position in a sentence)	Grammatical patterns in which the word is found
29	Personal feelings about the word	This helps with connotations
30	Appropriacy for certain social situations and contexts	Ex: Words used in job interviews vs. with family vs. with peers
31	Visual images people typically have for the word	Helps with dual coding (verbal/visual)
32	Mnemonics (mental devices)	Beyond acronym-type memory aids that help to remember the word

Adapted from

Diaz-Rico, L. & Ciancio, J. (2015, November). *The Great vocabulary challenge: Teaching 32 dimensions of a lexical item*. Paper presented at the

CATESOL Annual Conference, Anaheim, CA.