

The background features a series of concentric circles in light gray, some solid and some dashed, creating a ripple effect. A large blue speech bubble is centered on the page, containing the title and author information.

# Teaching Vocabulary to YL

**Miss Erika Ramirez**



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Important

Most of what you will read  
here can also be applied to  
older learners!

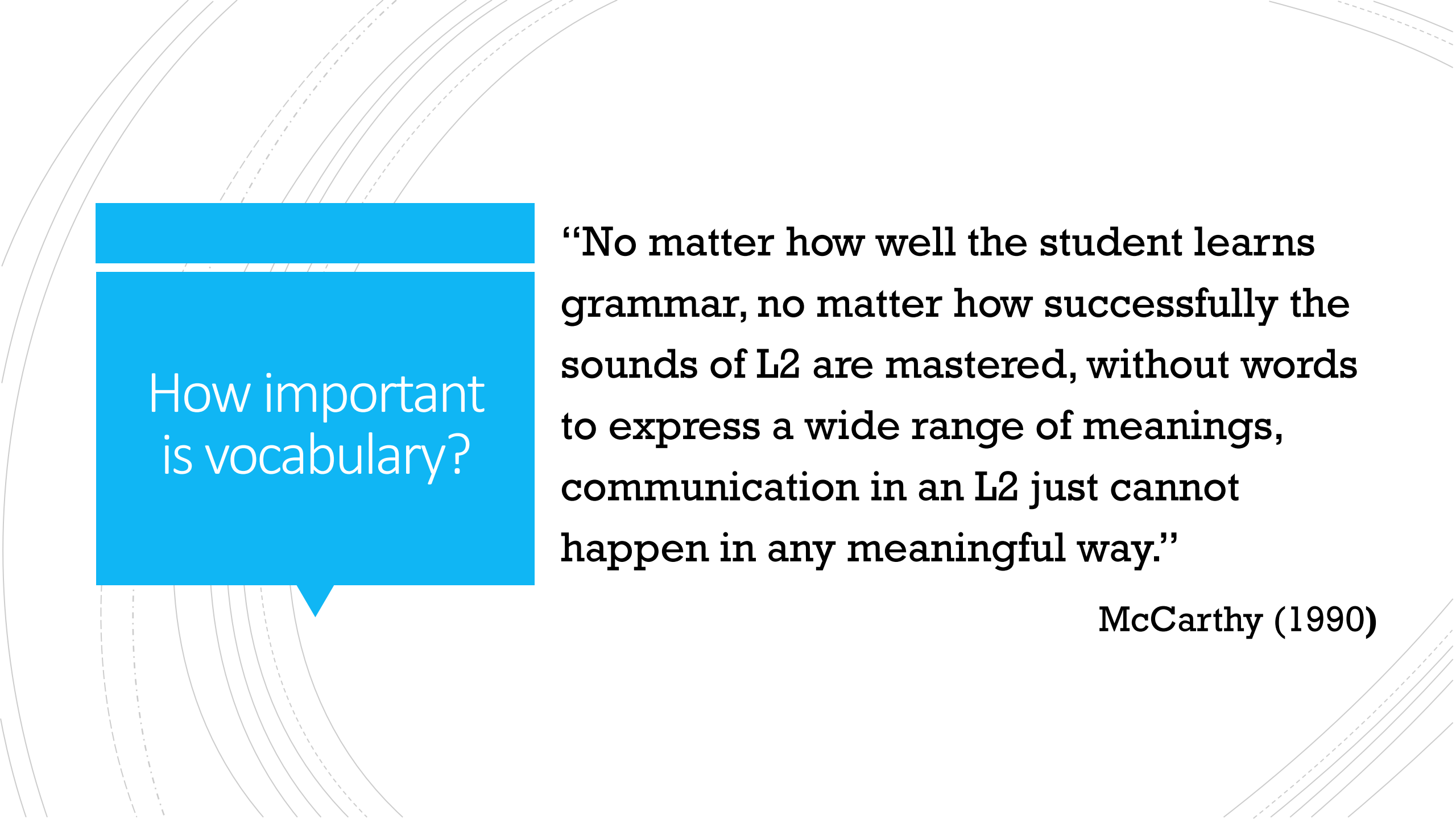


*Without grammar,  
very little can be conveyed,*

*without vocabulary,  
nothing can be conveyed,*

**- D. Wilkins**



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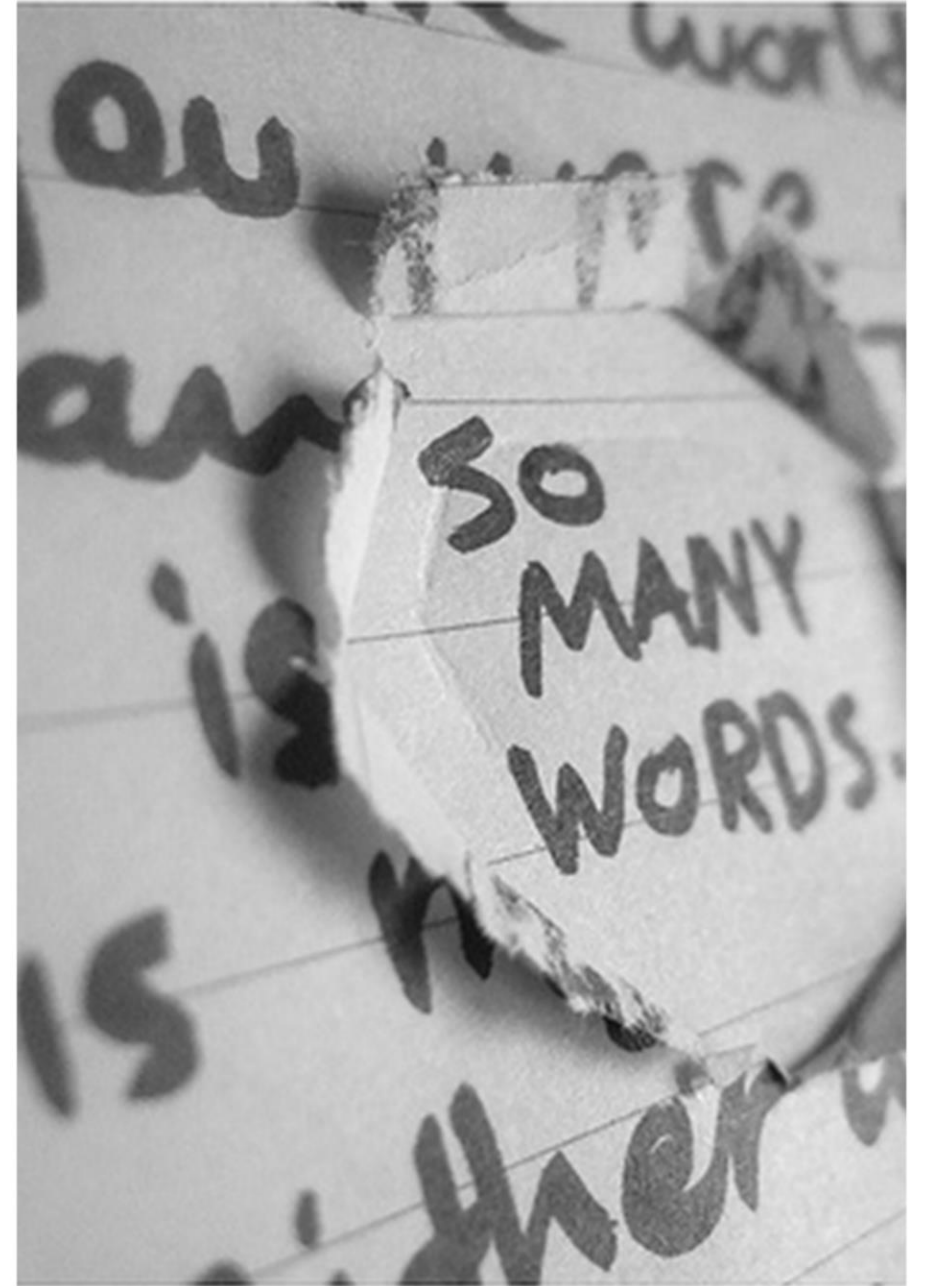
How important  
is vocabulary?

**“No matter how well the student learns grammar, no matter how successfully the sounds of L2 are mastered, without words to express a wide range of meanings, communication in an L2 just cannot happen in any meaningful way.”**

**McCarthy (1990)**



Knowing a word





# WHAT IS A WORD?

Is it a single word?

Is it a larger lexical item?

How many words does the following text has?

*I like looking for bits and pieces  
like old second-hand record players  
and doing them up to look like new*



- Lexical chunks (multi-word units) function as a unit.
  - Many words co-occur with other words.
  - Words may look and/or sound the same but have different meanings.
  - Mental lexicon: how words are stored in our minds
- 
- A photograph showing a collection of small, rectangular white cards scattered on a red surface. Each card has a single word printed on it in black ink. The words include "lemon", "savory", "succulent", "pizza", "always", "coffee", "devour", "mout", "new", "but", "only", "with". Some cards are overlapping each other, creating a sense of depth and abundance.
- Learning an L2 is a slow process because the exposure is not the same as when learning our L1.





# Word classes

- Nouns
- Pronouns
- Verbs
- Adjectives
- Adverbs
- Prepositions
- Conjunctions
- Determiners





# Word classes

- **Content words**

- Nouns
- Verbs
- Adjectives
- Adverbs

- **Grammatical (function) words**

- Pronouns
- Prepositions
- Conjunctions
- Determiners





Compare...

## **CONTENT WORDS**

- Like looking bits pieces old second-hand record players doing up look new

## **FUNCTION WORDS**

- I for and like and them to like



## Word families

### **Word + inflections**

### **+ most common derivatives**

Play

played/plays/playing

player/replay/playful

- Research shows that the mind groups these different forms of the same words together.



Did you know?

- A typical 5 year old English speaker knows 4,000-5,000 word families with approx. 1000 families added each year
- An educated native English speaker adult knows about 20,000 word families
- To understand a text, we need to understand about 95% of its words
- To learn a word, we need to encounter it between six and 16 times.



## Teaching vocabulary to YL

“For younger children,  
vocabulary and grammar  
should be learnt in a holistic way  
and only when they grow older  
and begin to show interest  
in language analysis,  
can separation begin...”

Pinter (2006: 88)

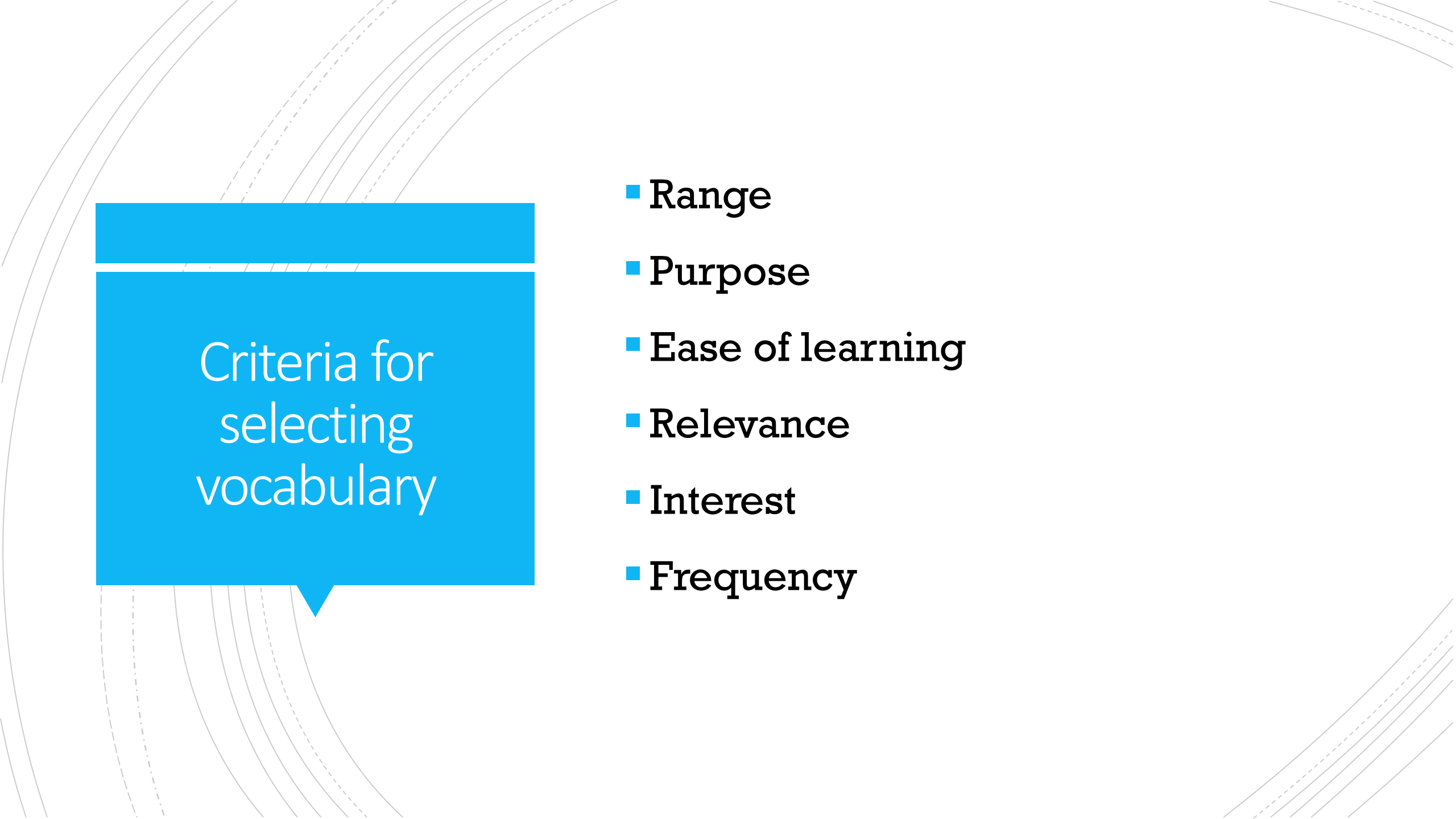




# Types of vocabulary

- Academic → 9% of the words in a text
- Technical → 5% of the words in a text
- Low frequency words → 5% of the words in a text
- High frequency words → 85% of written text  
95% of spoken discourse

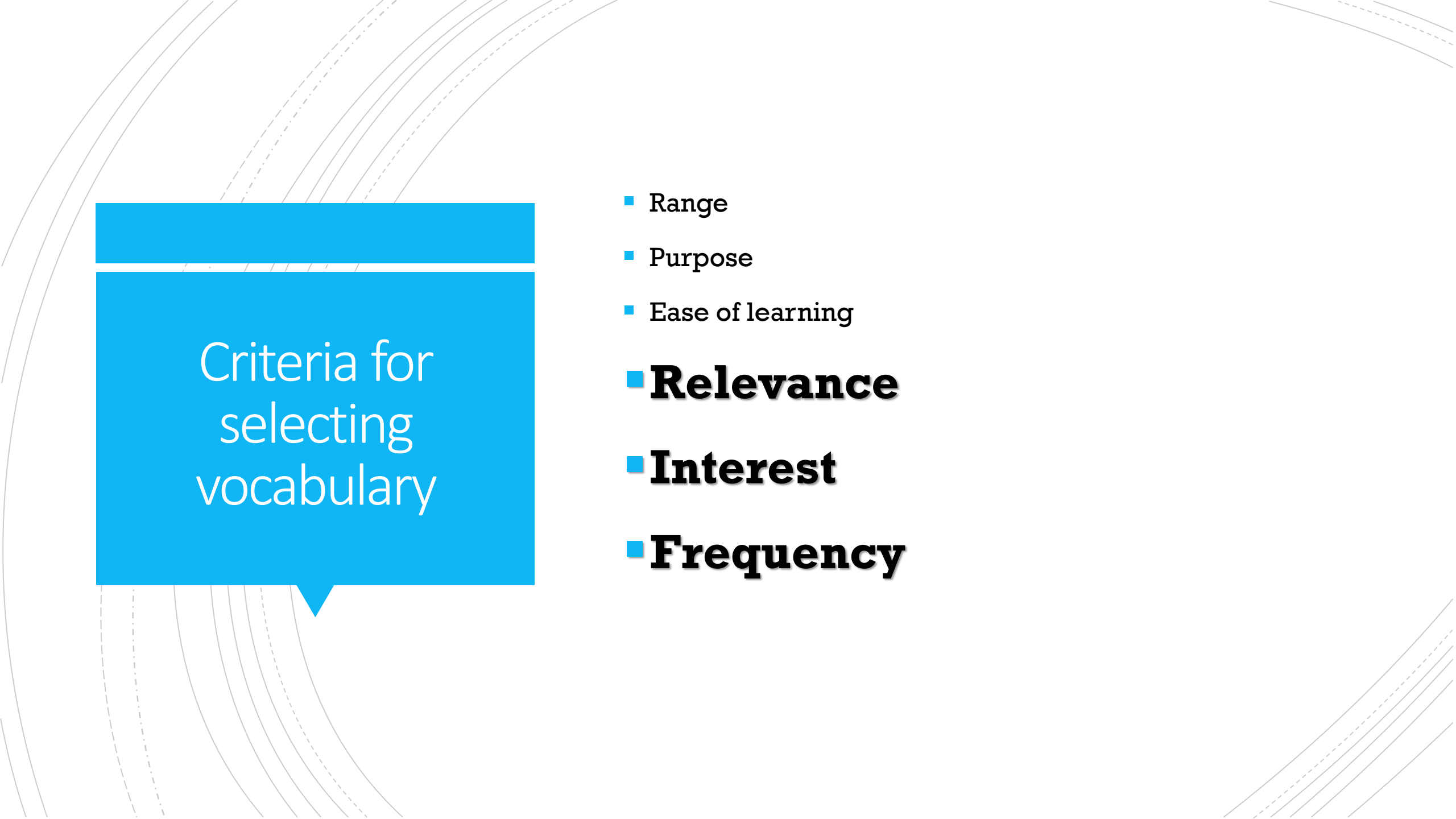


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## Criteria for selecting vocabulary

- **Range**
- **Purpose**
- **Ease of learning**
- **Relevance**
- **Interest**
- **Frequency**



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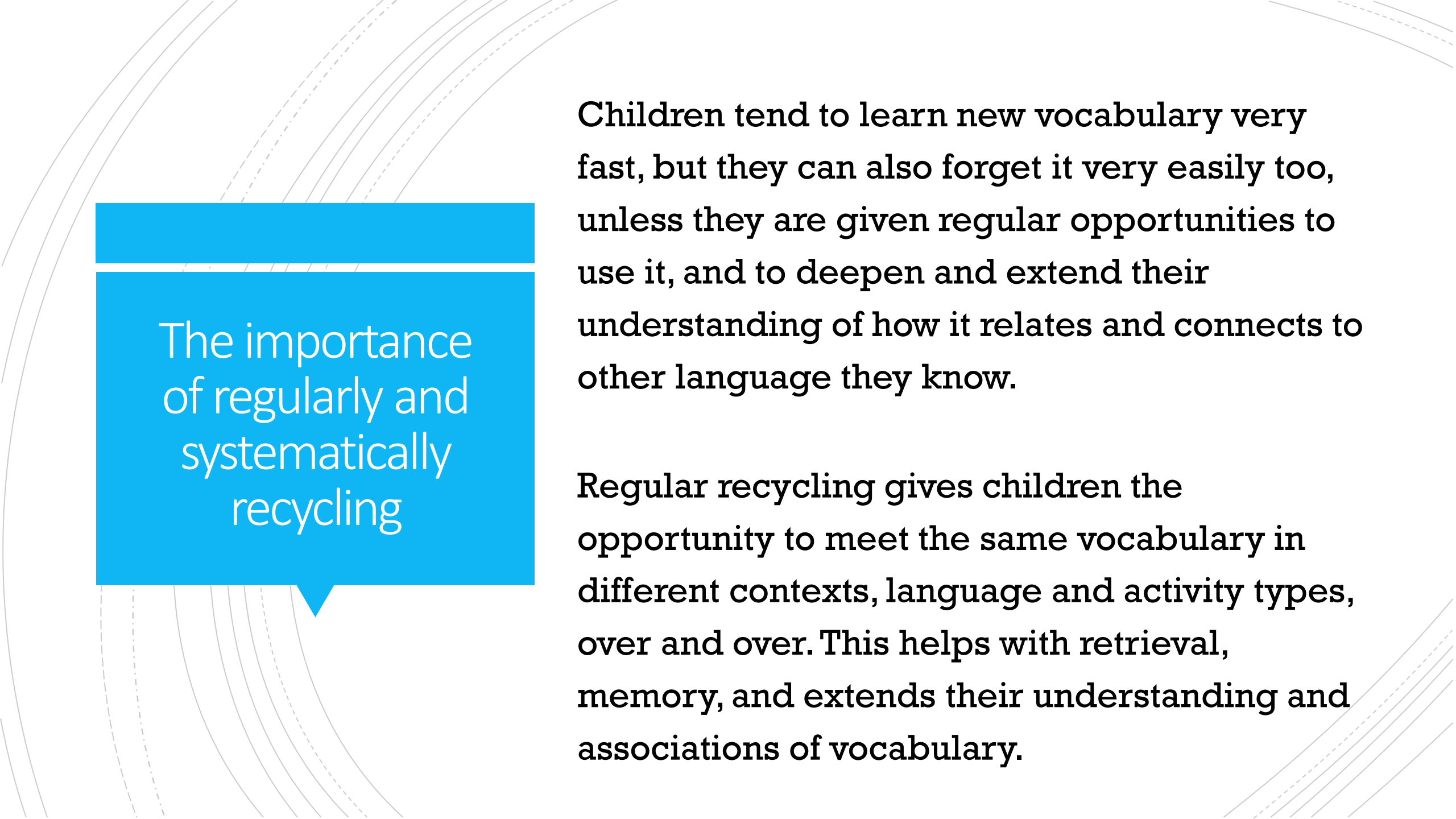
## Repetition & recycling

- Simply repeating an item seems to have little long-term effect.
- Meaningful repetition - Repeated encounters with the word.

**The more learners use a word, the more easily they will use it.**

**That's why it is important for teachers to recycle vocabulary.**



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## The importance of regularly and systematically recycling

Children tend to learn new vocabulary very fast, but they can also forget it very easily too, unless they are given regular opportunities to use it, and to deepen and extend their understanding of how it relates and connects to other language they know.

Regular recycling gives children the opportunity to meet the same vocabulary in different contexts, language and activity types, over and over. This helps with retrieval, memory, and extends their understanding and associations of vocabulary.



## Teaching vocabulary to YL

- When practicing vocabulary, it is important to provide opportunities to help children:
  - Associate words and meanings and develop their recall of vocabulary.
  - Think about the properties and meanings of words.
  - Improve their recognition and spelling of vocabulary.
  - Reinforce connections between words.
  - Personalize vocabulary learning.
  - Develop strategies for inferring meaning.
  - Develop strategies for conveying the meaning of unfamiliar words.
  - Collaborate and interact with others



## Teaching vocabulary to YL

- You can either start with the form and then the meaning, or viceversa.
- You should present the vocabulary in a **receptive and productive** way.
- **You should avoid introducing more than 7-8 new vocabulary items per lesson (if you really want your students to learn).**
- Remember recycling and meaningful repetition.
- New words should be introduced in context. Keep it interesting and relevant for them.





FIRST ENCOUNTER  
WITH A  
NEW WORD



A CLEAR IMAGE OF  
THE FORM OF THE  
NEW WORD



LEARNING THE  
MEANING  
OF THE WORD



MEMORY  
CONNECTION  
BETWEEN THE FORMS  
AND THE MEANING



USING  
THE WORD



## LEARNING A NEW WORD



*From RECEPTIVE KNOWLEDGE...*

*...to PRODUCTIVE KNOWLEDGE*



## The role of formulaic language

- Formulaic sequences are stored in the mental lexicon as one lexical unit.
- Looking at words as single units in isolation does not help YLs to see words in context
- It is only as children get older that they start to break down chunks
- Storybooks and songs provide a rich source of formulaic language



## Strategies and young learners

- Reading a story – encourage prediction
- Alphabetical order – to help with dictionary use
- Encouraging children to find clues for meaning in pictures and text
- Helping learners to reflect on the learning process through evaluating their achievements. How many words have they learnt today?

(Cameron, 2001)



## Further Reading (optional)

- Kids and vocabulary
  - <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/kids-vocabulary>
- Presenting vocabulary in Young learners classes
  - <https://www.englishclub.com/tefl-articles/young-learners-vocabulary.htm>
- How to teach ESL vocabulary
  - <https://bridge.edu/tefl/blog/teach-esl-vocabulary/>