

<https://joelswagman.blogspot.com/2024/05/practice-activities-for-vocabulary.html>

(*1) There's been some discussion in recent years about whether it's best to present vocabulary in lexical sets or not.

Historically, the preference was to present vocabulary items as part of a lexical set. (Older textbooks reflect this.) But then research came out that said that students actually remembered the vocabulary better when the vocabulary in the lesson was not all from the same lexical set. This is counterintuitive, but I guess the logic was that if you presented students with 20 vocabulary words that were all from the same context, the students would start to confuse the words with each other. See, for example, this article [HERE](#).

So, for a few years, the common wisdom was that the vocabulary in a lesson should *not* all be from the same lexical set.

But then the pendulum swung back the other way again, and people began to say that actually the research finding--that students learn better when the vocabulary is from different lexical sets--were over-reported, and maybe not accurate. So maybe we're now back again to the idea of teaching vocabulary as lexical sets?

...I don't know, and I've not kept up with the whole controversy in detail. This is just my impression of the whole thing, based on what I've been able to glean from [podcasts](#) and blogposts, et cetera. Let me know if I'm getting anything wrong here...

But all that being said, for the average ESL teacher, I think it's a moot point. That's because the average ESL teacher doesn't have any control over what the target vocabulary will be. [Your average ESL teacher is just given a textbook and told to follow the textbook](#), and so the target vocabulary is whatever the textbook publishers choose. The only thing in the teacher's control is how best to practice this vocabulary, and so that's the purpose of this blogpost.

(*2) In many of my old posts, when I use the term "vocabulary set", I'm usually talking about the target vocabulary for a specific lesson. So, for example, in my post "[Activities that can be used for any Vocabulary Set](#)" what I mean is activities that can be used for any vocabulary lesson--whether or not the target vocabulary comes from the same lexical set or not.