

# Analysing English vocabulary with the *New General Service List*: Pedagogical applications

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## 1 Overview

Learning vocabulary is a complex process in which the learner needs to acquire both the form and a variety of meanings/uses of a given lexical item (Nation, 2001). For the beginner the main question, of course, is where to start. General vocabulary wordlists can assist in this process by providing a list of common vocabulary items. Although there are a number of general vocabulary lists available, the by far most influential and widely-used both in pedagogy and vocabulary research is West's GSL (Carter 2012). However, a number of problems with West's GSL have been pointed out over the years (cf. Gilner 2011). GSL was often criticised with respect to the principles on which it was created as well as with respect to its utility.

In response to the problems identified with the GSL, a *New General Service List (new-GSL)* was developed using a bottom-up, quantitative corpus-linguistic approach (Brezina & Gablasova 2013). The *new-GSL* is based on four language corpora (*LOB*, *BNC*, *BE06* and *EnTenTen12*) of the total size of almost 13 billion running words.

## 2 Outline

This practical workshop explores the development and use of pedagogical wordlists – lists of vocabulary intended for teaching and learning purposes. In the first part, the focus will be on different approaches to development of vocabulary lists. In particular, the *quantitative paradigm* that was used for the development of the *new-GSL* will be discussed. Participants will be introduced to different notions of a “word” (types, lemmas, word families and lexemes) as well as to different measures of word frequency and distribution (absolute frequency, average reduced frequency etc.).

In the second part, the pedagogical applications will be explored. The workshop will introduce a new online vocabulary analysis tool (<http://corpora.lancs.ac.uk/vocab>) which calculates lexical coverage of text and categorises words according to different word classes in different *new-GSL* frequency bands. In this section, the following applications of the *new-GSL* will be discussed:

- Measuring lexical coverage/appropriateness of language materials
- Use of wordlists (and in particular the *new-GSL*) in corpus-based language teaching
- Development of specialised wordlists using the *new-GSL*
- Development of materials for practicing most frequent English words

## References

- Brezina, V. & Gablasova, D. (2013) *Is There a Core General Vocabulary?* Introducing the New General Service List. *Applied Linguistics* <http://apli.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2013/08/25/applin.amt018.full>
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