# Corpus-Generated High Frequency Word Lists:
# A Teacher's Perspective

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## Abstract

This paper considers the role of corpus-generated high frequency word lists (HFWLs) in the selections of vocabulary for second language teaching. The paper is based on research which investigated empirical evidence for the theory of learning a base of approximately 2000 high frequency words when learning English as a second language – a theory supported in the literature (e.g. Carter and McCarthy, 1988; Laufer and Nation, 1999; Nation, 2001; Nation and Meara, 2002; Read, 2004).

   Whilst HFWLs are published along with concurrent advantages and suggested uses; there is little evidence in the literature of how they are used in the classroom by teachers. Therefore, a qualitative study was carried out to investigate how HFWLs are used. Eight teachers were interviewed about their teaching practices, to gain professional perspectives on high frequency vocabulary (HFV) and HFWLs.

   It was found that published HFWLs were rarely used by these teachers because they did not suit the teachers' needs; the teachers defined "high frequency" differently. The findings revealed that the teachers had a learner-centred approach, which rendered 'ready-made' HFWLs unhelpful. To these teachers 'high frequency words' were defined by considering word occurrence in learning contexts, and not corpus-driven. Textbooks were proposed as HFV resources, providing learners with exposure to the words found in HFWLs. This, the teachers felt, renders the HFWL redundant in the classroom and of better use to the textbook writer.

## References

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