Introduction

Aims

Using French Vocabulary is designed to provide students of French with a comprehensive and structured vocabulary book which can be used at all levels of undergraduate French programmes. To the dual or single honours student, it offers broad coverage of the concrete and abstract vocabulary relating to the physical, cultural, social, commercial and political environment, as well as exposure to commonly encountered technical terminology. While the principal target audience is the university or college student, many of the units could also be readily adapted to and integrated into 'Language for Special Purposes' courses.

Vocabulary acquisition is often a fraught issue for both teachers and learners of languages. No language teacher would dispute the importance of setting realistic and measurable learning objectives. However, while the many excellent language textbooks which have been published in recent years provide a wealth of authentic target language materials and co-ordinated exercises, the student's lexical exposure often remains limited to the vocabulary which 'crops up' in the texts and recordings studied in class. Many students devote considerable time and effort to the compilation of vocabulary notebooks in order to supplement classwork and to fill gaps in their knowledge, but, by its nature, such supplementary work is very time-consuming and somewhat erratic in its outcomes. Furthermore, students are often disheartened not only by the sheer labour involved in vocabulary notation, but also by their uncertainty regarding what they are expected to know and what they can expect of themselves at a given stage in their university or college course. Much anxiety is generated by speculation regarding what is 'likely to come up' in examinations and tests, and both teachers and students recognise that a single lexical gap can sabotage the comprehension and translation of an entire phrase or sentence. In recent years many attempts have been made to alleviate these problems by the writers and publishers of French textbooks. In the course of the last decade a substantial number of high quality general vocabulary books and specialised glossaries have been published.[1] However, very few of these books provide reinforcement exercises and none of them attempts to define learning goals for particular levels of competence or to grade lexical items according to usefulness, difficulty and likely frequency of occurrence. Most standard vocabulary textbooks offer a single learning strategy: memorisation.

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[1] See bibliography

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Although few would dispute the argument that rote-learning has a place
in any subject requiring the acquisition of rules and the mastery of
meanings and definitions, much of the effort expended will be wasted if
the memorised items are not put into practice. While recognising that
there is no substitute for total linguistic and cultural immersion in a
francophone country, this book is distinguished from standard
vocabulary books by its more methodical, graduated approach to
vocabulary acquisition, by its provision of a varied menu of
reinforcement and exploitation exercises and by its emphasis on
proactive, self-instructional approaches to vocabulary expansion.

The broad aims of the book can be summarised as follows:
- to provide a textbook which can be used throughout the
  undergraduate degree course and which meets the needs of a modular
  programme
- to provide a practical topic-based vocabulary which will constitute a
  sound basis for communication in a wide range of circumstances
- to promote the self-instructional learning process
- to facilitate the acquisition of vocabulary by the grading of word-lists
  according to the needs and levels of students
- to provide exercises for private study and classroom use which will
  reinforce the work done on lists, develop good dictionary use,
  encourage independent and collaborative learning, promote precision
  and awareness of nuance and register and offer the opportunity for
  the development of cognate transferable skills such as communicative
  competence, teamwork and problem-solving.

Structure and organisation

The organisation and ordering of word-lists have been determined by
the principal objectives of the book. The division of the book into
twenty units allows it to be easily integrated into a modular course
structure, either as a set text or as a supplementary self-instructional
learning aid. Words and phrases have been grouped according to topic
in order to assist students in the acquisition of a corpus of vocabulary
relating to the situations and issues which they are most likely to
encounter inside and outside the classroom. Within units, words have
been arranged in such a way as to facilitate assimilation: generically
related items will normally be listed together; synonyms and antonyms
are normally included in the same sub-section; items which are usually
found in a particular place or context, which are used for similar
purposes (e.g. household appliances, tools, etc.), which refer to the
members of a particular social group or species or which are associated
with related activities will be grouped together. Finally, the book tries to
establish a balance between breadth and depth by graduating the
acquisition of topic-related vocabulary sets. Thus, within each section,
words and phrases have been grouped into manageable, assimilable units
and broadly 'graded' according to likely usefulness and difficulty. Such
a structure not only encourages students to see vocabulary acquisition as
a 'building-blocks' process, but also provides a working definition of

goals and expectations for a given level and a structure in which
specialisation and refinement of knowledge can be measured.

**Criteria of
selection**

The selection and grading of lexical items for a textbook inevitably
involve somewhat arbitrary decisions. The concern to establish units of
a regular and manageable length was a major factor in the determination
of 'cut-off' points. The textbook is, above all, a learning tool and its
usefulness and effectiveness will depend to a large extent on its ease of
handling for both students and teachers and on the setting of reasonable
and realistic assimilation targets. Within units, the distribution of
individual lexical items according to level has been based not on
statistical analysis, but upon my own experience of teaching French at
all levels within the undergraduate degree programme. My prime
criterion has been likely frequency of need and encounter in a variety of
linguistic contexts.

I have selected items which students are unlikely to know already or
which they may have encountered and which they understand, but
which they may have difficulty in retrieving in an active context. Many
students express frustration concerning their defective retention of
concrete vocabulary and maintain that they seem to forget everyday
functional words more readily than abstract/discursive vocabulary.
Thus, most of the units include substantial glossaries relating to the
objects, tools and commodities associated with particular activities and
practical situations. Also included are terms from a wide range of
spheres which one would expect the well-informed, advanced language
learner to know. Thus, the units on the arts, media, education,
medicine, science, religion, history, geography, law, finance, and politics
expose students to the vocabulary which they are likely to encounter in
the press, on television and in standard textbooks in other disciplines. I
have omitted exclusively specialist terms, but have tried to take into
account the ways in which certain technical words filter into everyday
language (e.g. medical, legal, computing and industrial terminology).
Finally, I have included items (e.g. unexpected genders and spellings,
faux amis) which pose particular assimilation difficulties.

Exercises

The exercises which accompany the word-lists are designed to reinforce
the learning process and to encourage recognition, accurate use and
creative exploitation of the acquired lexical items in a variety of
contexts. A substantial proportion of the exercises are self-instructional
in nature, encouraging students to expand vocabulary through personal
lexical research using both bilingual and monolingual sources. The
provision of keys and 'fair copies' for certain exercises allows students
to gauge their own progress and assess their own work. Other exercises
are designed for various types of class-work, including oral presentation
and translation, group work and paired activities. While the range of the
accompanying exercises reflects a general concern to maintain interest
and concentration through variety, individual exercises have been

designed to develop quite specific skills. These skills relate not only to linguistic competence, but also to more broadly 'transferable' skills such as analysis, synthesis, deduction, lateral thinking, problem-solving strategy and the development of effective collaborative methods and teamwork. The following outline identifies the specific aims of each type of exercise.

Exercises	*Aims*
Differentiation	**to** promote precise and lucid exposition in French **to** draw attention to crucial differences between semantically or formally related words
Definition	**to** promote precision of expression and lucid exposition **to** promote efficient use of monolingual dictionaries **to** encourage lateral thinking in French (as opposed to word-for-word translation)
Matching word and definition	**to** reinforce work done on vocabulary lists, to remind students of the meanings of the more technical items in the lists **to** encourage good dictionary practice and the differentiation of related terms
Translation of idioms (to and from French)	**to** familiarise students with commonly used idioms and to encourage the checking and notation of the 'locutions' associated with a given word
Identification of standard register equivalents of familiar words and expressions	**to** promote an awareness of register and contextual appropriateness
Translation of brief expressions involving a single French or English word	**to** highlight idiomatic differences between the two languages **to** encourage students to see the individual lexical item as a springboard for further lexical research.
Composition of sentences	**to** promote the production of convincing French sentences in which idiom and register are compatible with context
Composition of lists of words with a common root	**to** develop an awareness of the principles of word formation in French (e.g. the verbal prefix and the formation of nouns; differences between French and English suffixation, etc.)
Identification of alternative or multiple meanings of common words	**to** promote an awareness of polyvalence **to** promote good dictionary practice and **to** eliminate common errors made by students in translation

Gap completion	**to** develop and test awareness of the suitability of a word in a given context
	to refine understanding of the application of terms which belong to particular lexical sets
Translation into French	**to** encourage active use of the vocabulary given in a particular unit
	to permit students (and their teachers) to measure success in acquiring the vocabulary of a particular unit
Translation from French	**to** encourage students to resolve problems encountered in translating authentic French language materials
	to make them aware of the differences between 'knowing' a word and translating it effectively in context.
Group oral translation from French	**to** develop standard translation skills
	to promote awareness of the role of interpretation in translation
	to highlight the usefulness of consultation and collaboration in translation work
	to promote negotiating skills
Group projects	**to** promote constructive interaction among learners
	to develop competence in the generation of convincing French discourse appropriate to a range of given contexts
Etudes de texte	**to** encourage students to read authentic language materials in an analytical way (i.e. to encourage them to go beyond broad understanding and to use texts as lexical and idiomatic resources)
Composition	**to** give students the opportunity to exploit the vocabulary which they have acquired in a relatively free manner (the exercises will be 'structured' to varying degrees).
Word games	**to** reinforce work on vocabulary lists
	to refine competence in comprehension, definition and differentiation
Multiple choice	**to** refine competence in differentiation and comprehension
Role-play	**to** promote interaction among learners and to develop effective communication and linguistic responsiveness in a practical situation
Résumé	**to** develop competence in synthesis and paraphrasing
	to refine competence in comprehension
	to promote active reading approaches to authentic French language materials

6   Introduction

Guide to symbols

- Register is indicated as follows: ③ elevated, formal language
                                     ① colloquialism, slang
- 'Difficult' genders are indicated in bold: **le, la, (m), (f)**
- Exercises for which answers are provided are indicated by ✓

Tips on dictionary use

❦ Familiarise yourself with the conventions, symbols and abbreviations of the dictionary. Pay particular attention to the markers relating to register and archaism.

❦ Familiarise yourself with the phonetic conventions used in the dictionary.

❦ Use bilingual *and* monolingual dictionaries in tandem. Where bilingual dictionaries offer a range of translations for a given word, check usage in a good monolingual dictionary.

❦ Remember that you may need to consult several dictionaries to find the best translation of a given word, expression or construction.

❦ Check cross-referenced entries within dictionaries.

❦ Read the full entry for a given lexical item. The word you are researching may have multiple secondary senses or may figure in a number of set expressions with distinctive idiomatic meanings.

❦ When you look up a word check the entries which precede and follow it. These entries may be derived from the same root. It is often easier to learn words in semantically and etymologically related groups than as separate lexical items.

❦ Some dictionaries list synonyms and antonyms. Check these sections when you consult entries and note useful, unfamiliar words.

❦ Make a note of the nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs formed from a basic stem. Pay particular attention to the ways in which nouns are derived from verbs and note differences between nominal endings in French and English.

❦ Note and learn constructions which combine verbs, nouns and adjectives with particular prepositions.

❦ Note and learn 'difficult' or 'surprising' genders. Pay particular attention to nouns which have two genders.

❦ Pay close attention to patterns of prefixation and suffixation. Master the rules relating to suffixation and gender. (You will find a section on the topic in most advanced French grammar books.)

❦ Note and learn constructions which require the use of the subjunctive.

❦ Note and learn 'faux amis' and homonyms.

❦ Use the dictionary as a resource for active learning. In the course of consultation, you will encounter innumerable words and expressions which may not serve your immediate purposes, but which will be useful to you in other contexts. Note useful unfamiliar vocabulary and locutions. Build regular, short time-slots into your programme for dictionary browsing.

❦ Familiarise yourself with the various facilities of electronic dictionaries (e.g. *Le Robert électronique, Oxford Superlex, Larousse Unabridged French Dictionary on CD-ROM*). The electronic dictionary makes browsing much easier and quicker.

Tips on learning vocabulary

✍ Pay close attention not only to the word, but also to register and, in the case of nouns, to gender. Mark irregular verbs, irregular adverbs and learn adjectives which are invariable or which have irregular feminine or plural forms.

✍ Build regular, short slots into your timetable for the learning of the lists in this book plus those which you have compiled yourself. Intensive, brainstorming revision preceding examinations is unlikely to yield good results. Long-term retention depends on regular learning and revision.

✍ Repeat some of the reinforcement exercises in this book at intervals of one week, one month, three months. This will allow you to gauge your success at long-term retention and will highlight areas requiring revision.

✍ When in doubt, verify your understanding of the meaning and use of unfamiliar words and idiomatic phrases with a native French language speaker.

✍ Use the authentic language materials which you encounter on your programme as language learning resources for proactive lexical enquiry. These resources include language textbooks, set texts for your literary, cultural and areas studies courses, television and radio programmes, newspapers, magazines and academic journals.

✍ Form a tutorial partnership with another class-member. Negotiate a list of common words which will form the basis of a lexical search. Agree on the distribution of labour. Share the results of your enquiries. Prepare brief vocabulary tests for each other.

Revision suggestions for the mastery of vocabulary-related grammatical points

Use and omission of articles

Parts of the body
- Hawkins and Towell, *French Grammar and Usage*, pp. 31–2
- Lang and Perez, *Modern French Grammar*, p. 17
- Wakely and Béjoint, *French Usage*, pp. 169–78
- Astington, *French Structures*, pp. 17–19
- Ferrar, *A French Reference Grammar*, pp. 125–6
- Worth-Stylianou, *French: A Handbook of Grammar, Current Usage and Word Power*, p. 12
- Judge and Healey, *A Reference Grammar of Modern French*, pp. 29–30

Employment
- Hawkins and Towell, *French Grammar and Usage*, pp. 189–90
- Lang and Perez, *Modern French Grammar*, p. 22
- Ferrar, *A French Reference Grammar*, p. 134
- Worth-Stylianou, *French: A Handbook of Grammar, Current Usage and Word Power*, p. 8
- Judge and Healey, *A Reference Grammar of Modern French*, p. 32

Religion and festivals
- Wakely and Béjoint, *French Usage*, pp. 182–6
- Lang and Perez, *Modern French Grammar*, pp. 18–19

Abstract Nouns
- Ferrar, *A French Reference Grammar*, pp. 132–3

- Astington, *French Structures*, p. 16
- Worth-Stylianou, *French: A Handbook of Grammar, Current Usage and Word Power*, pp. 10–11

Titles
- Hawkins and Towell, *French Grammar and Usage*, p. 31
- Wakely and Béjoint, *French Usage*, pp. 197–202
- Lang and Perez, *Modern French Grammar*, pp. 20–1
- Ferrar, *A French Reference Grammar*, pp. 126–7
- Grew and Olivier, *1001 Pitfalls in French*, p. 186
- Judge and Healey, *A Reference Grammar of Modern French*, pp. 28–9

Geographical names
- Batchelor and Offord, *Using French*, pp. 259–68
- Hawkins and Towell, *French Grammar and Usage*, pp. 29–30
- Lang and Perez, *Modern French Grammar*, p. 20
- Wakely and Béjoint, *French Usage*, pp. 29–69
- Ferrar, *A French Reference Grammar*, pp. 127–8
- Astington, *French Structures*, pp. 19–21
- Worth-Stylianou, *French: A Handbook of Grammar, Current Usage and Word Power*, p.11

Names of languages
- Hawkins and Towell, *French Grammar and Usage*, p. 30
- Lang and Perez, *Modern French Grammar*, p. 21
- Worth-Stylianou, *French: A Handbook of Grammar, Current Usage and Word Power*, p.11

Seasons
- Hawkins and Towell, *French Grammar and Usage*, p. 30
- Judge and Healey, *A Reference Grammar of Modern French*, p.29
- Lang and Perez, *Modern French Grammar*, p. 18

Quantities, speed and price
- Hawkins and Towell, *French Grammar and Usage*, p. 31
- Lang and Perez, *Modern French Grammar*, p. 88
- Ferrar, *A French Reference Grammar*, p. 124
- Judge and Healey, *A Reference Grammar of Modern French*, p. 29

Games and sports
- Wakely and Béjoint, *French Usage*, pp. 195–7

Set phrases
- Hawkins and Towell, *French Grammar and Usage*, p. 40
- Ferrar, *A French Reference Grammar*, p. 137
- Judge and Healey, *A Reference Grammar of Modern French*, p. 29

Nouns

Gender and number
- Hawkins and Towell, *French Grammar and Usage*, pp. 4–26

- Batchelor and Offord, *Using French*, pp. 149–59
- Lang and Perez, *Modern French Grammar*, pp. 35–9
- Worth-Stylianou, *French: A Handbook of Grammar, Current Usage and Word Power*, pp. 16–34
- Ferrar, *A French Reference Grammar*, pp. 138–54
- Grew and Olivier, *1001 Pitfalls in French*, pp. 18–28
- Judge and Healey, *A Reference Grammar of Modern French*, pp. 4–11
- Bonnard, *Code du français courant*, pp. 141–9

Patterns of prefixation and suffixation
- Judge and Healey, *A Reference Grammar of Modern French*, pp. 16–17
- Bonnard, *Code du français courant*, p. 113

Patterns of nominalisation
- Astington, *French Structures*, pp. 200–5

Compound nouns
- Hawkins and Towell, *French Grammar and Usage*, pp. 17–20, 22–5
- Batchelor and Offord, *Using French*, p. 151
- Lang and Perez, *Modern French Grammar*, pp. 39–42
- Astington, *French Structures*, pp. 10–14
- Wakely and Béjoint, *French Usage*, pp. 143–4, 145–6, 148–9, 152, 154, 156–7, 159–162, 166
- Judge and Healey, *A Reference Grammar of Modern French*, pp. 11–12, 17–23
- Bonnard, *Code du français courant*, p. 120

Collective nouns
- Wakely and Béjoint, *French Usage*, pp. 88–90
- Ferrar, *A French Reference Grammar*, pp. 114–15

Adjectives

Position of adjectives
- Batchelor and Offord, *Using French*, pp. 160–5
- Hawkins and Towell, *French Grammar and Usage*, pp. 87–8
- Lang and Perez, *Modern French Grammar*, pp. 42–4
- Astington, *French Structures*, pp. 25–7
- Ferrar, *A French Reference Grammar*, pp. 155–9
- Grew and Olivier, *1001 Pitfalls in French*, pp. 14–17
- Worth-Stylianou, *French: A Handbook of Grammar, Current Usage and Word Power*, pp. 43–7

Irregular adjectives
- Hawkins and Towell, *French Grammar and Usage*, pp. 90–4
- Lang and Perez, *Modern French Grammar*, pp. 45–7
- Grew and Olivier, *1001 Pitfalls in French*, pp. 11–12
- Worth-Stylianou, *French: A Handbook of Grammar, Current Usage and Word Power*, pp. 35–7
- Judge and Healey, *A Reference Grammar of Modern French*, pp. 264–6
- Ferrar, *A French Reference Grammar*, pp. 146–8

Adjectives of colour
- Hawkins and Towell, *French Grammar and Usage*, pp. 95–6
- Lang and Perez, *Modern French Grammar*, pp. 47–8
- Wakely and Béjoint, *French Usage*, pp. 134–7
- Astington, *French Structures*, pp. 27–8
- Worth-Stylianou, *French: A Handbook of Grammar, Current Usage and Word Power*, p. 42
- Bonnard, *Code du français courant*, p. 156

Compound adjectives
- Hawkins and Towell, *French Grammar and Usage*, pp. 96–7
- Astington, *French Structures*, pp. 27–8
- Judge and Healey, *A Reference Grammar of Modern French*, p. 271
- Bonnard, *Code du français courant*, p. 121

Adjectival phrases
- Hawkins and Towell, *French Grammar and Usage*, p. 38

Adjectives used as nouns
- Hawkins and Towell, *French Grammar and Usage*, pp. 89–90
- Astington, *French Structures*, pp. 28–9
- Judge and Healey, *A Reference Grammar of Modern French*, p. 274

Adjectives used as adverbs
- Hawkins and Towell, *French Grammar and Usage*, p. 90
- Astington, *French Structures*, p. 31
- Grew and Olivier, *1001 Pitfalls in French*, pp. 13–14
- Worth-Stylianou *French: A Handbook of Grammar, Current Usage and Word Power*, pp. 42–3

Formation of adjectives from nouns
- Astington, *French Structures*, pp. 205–6, 207–10

Formation of adjectives from verbs
- Astington, *French Structures*, pp. 206–7

Numbers and measurements

Cardinal and ordinal numbers
- Hawkins and Towell, *French Grammar and Usage*, pp. 130–7
- Batchelor and Offord, *Using French*, p. 148
- Lang and Perez, *Modern French Grammar*, pp. 83–8
- Ferrar, *A French Reference Grammar*, pp. 181–98
- Wakely and Béjoint, *French Usage*, pp. 80–8
- Judge and Healey, *A Reference Grammar of Modern French*, pp. 45–50

Measurements and space
- Hawkins and Towell, *French Grammar and Usage*, pp. 142–4
- Batchelor and Offord, *Using French*, p. 147
- Wakely and Béjoint, *French Usage*, pp. 77–9, 93–102
- Lang and Perez, *Modern French Grammar*, pp. 89–90