Introduction

Goals

Using German Vocabulary aims to offer a comprehensive, thematically structured vocabulary textbook for all but the very beginning levels of undergraduate instruction in German. The individual units treat topics that expose students to a broad range of vocabulary dealing with the physical, social, cultural, economic and political world. Vocabulary is graded into three levels that reflect frequency, difficulty and degree of usefulness. Exercises and activities are provided to reinforce and aid acquisition. The range of topics covered and the levels of competence addressed allow the book to be integrated into the curriculum in a variety of courses at multiple stages of any undergraduate program.

Because first-year German textbooks typically include a list of vocabulary to learn in each chapter, the acquisition of vocabulary during the first year of college-level instruction in German is relatively straightforward. After the first year, however, it becomes more difficult for instructors and students alike to deal with vocabulary in a systematic manner. Instruction at the intermediate and advanced levels tends to centre around authentic texts in the target language. The vocabulary that students acquire at these levels is thus limited in large part to the vocabulary that occurs in these texts. *Using German Vocabulary* is a tool for dealing systematically with vocabulary acquisition beyond the first year of instruction.

The past decade has seen the publication of a number of German language textbooks that seek to address the issue of vocabulary acquisition beyond the beginning stages of language learning. Some provide thematically organized word lists; others provide thematically organized vocabulary exercises; only two recently published textbooks offer thematically organized word lists together with reinforcement exercises (James and James 1991 together with Müller and Bock 1991; Lübke 1998). *Using German Vocabulary* sets itself apart from these in the level of sophistication of vocabulary presented, in the grading of

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this vocabulary into three levels, and in the variety and extensiveness of accompanying exercises and activities.

The acquisition of vocabulary is a cumulative process, involving multiple stages that range from passive recognition to active production (Nation 2001; Stoller and Grabe 1993). Different learning strategies contribute in different ways to this process. One strategy, learning from word cards, is an efficient way of learning large numbers of words in a relatively short time (Nation 2001:302). The word lists in *Using German Vocabulary* are intended as a useful source of vocabulary for the production of word cards. Two other important vocabulary learning strategies, using word parts (prefixes, bases, suffixes) and dictionary use, can contribute to the speed in which learners increase the size of their vocabulary (Nation 2001:263–281). *Using German Vocabulary* provides a special chapter on "Words and word formation" that discusses the structure of German words and addresses the issue of dictionary use. Various exercises in the twenty main units promote the awareness of word parts; many exercises and activities in these units involve dictionary use. The exercises in *Using German Vocabulary* are not limited to the word level of vocabulary acquisition. Authentic target language texts, for example, provide various opportunities for students to work with vocabulary in context. As the discussion of the various exercise types below shows, the exercises in each unit are designed to offer students a variety of ways in which to understand as well as use German vocabulary.

Using German Vocabulary is designed for classroom as well as individual use. Because of the range of topics covered, it can be used in a variety of courses as a primary or supplementary text. It also lends itself to self–study. An answer key is provided for a number of exercises in each unit, and the correct answers to many exercises are relatively easy to determine.

Structure and organization

The vocabulary in this book has been organized thematically into twenty units. Each unit presents vocabulary that centres on several related topics. Unit 11, for example, covers the topics of leisure and sport; unit 12 deals with tourism, travel and transport. Each broad topic within a given unit is divided into subtopics in order to provide units for acquisition that are manageable in size and to provide groupings of vocabulary that are semantically and pragmatically more coherent. In unit 9, for example, the broad topic of the visual and performing arts is further subdivided into the subtopics of painting and sculpture, music, dance, theatre, cinema and film, and photography.

Within each subtopic, the ordering of vocabulary items is intended to highlight the structural, semantic and pragmatic relationships among

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words in order to facilitate the acquisition process. For example, words like *Gemüsegarten* 'vegetable garden' and *Obstgarten* 'orchard', which have the form *-garten* 'garden' in common, are listed together to show structural similarities. Synonyms like *Bibliothek* 'library' and *Bücherei* 'library' and antonyms like *bestehen* 'pass' and *durchfallen* 'fail' are grouped close together to bring out the semantic relationships between lexical items. Words for objects that tend to occur together in everyday life, words like *Hammer* 'hammer' and *Nagel* 'nail', for example, are placed together to capitalize on natural associations. The order of items presented here should not be viewed as somehow definitive or static, however. There are many ways in which lexical items can be grouped together and ordered; this book presents just one. Furthermore, because the lists are intended as the basis for the construction of word cards, the order in which vocabulary items appear should be viewed as only temporary. (See the section below on tips for vocabulary learning.)

The vocabulary in each unit is graded into three levels. The first level contains more common, general–purpose terms as well as terms that are of relatively high frequency. The complexity and difficulty of vocabulary items increases in the second and third levels, so that the third level contains more terms that are technical in nature, semantically complex, marked in the sense that they belong to formal or colloquial registers, etc. Exercises corresponding to the three levels of vocabulary follow the word lists in each unit.

Criteria of selection

Using German Vocabulary includes more than just the most frequent vocabulary items in a given subject area. Because one goal of this textbook is to expose students to useful words they might not otherwise have been exposed to, less frequent but nevertheless useful vocabulary items are included in the word lists. Vocabulary items have been gathered from various sources, including specialized dictionaries and textbooks. Regional variation in vocabulary (primarily north–south differences) is noted; frequently encountered regional variants are listed together with their equivalents in the standard language. Vocabulary items that belong to the colloquial language as well as those that belong to elevated speech are included in the lists.

In dividing the vocabulary in each unit into three levels, an attempt was made to keep the number of entries in each level roughly the same. For this reason, the three levels should be viewed as representing a continuum of increasing complexity and difficulty rather than as three distinct levels of lexical proficiency.

There will inevitably be vocabulary items that one might expect to occur in these lists but that do not. If the lists were to be kept

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manageable in size, it was not possible to include every potentially
relevant and useful lexical item. When words needed to be cut because
of length considerations, compound nouns were among those that were
typically excluded. The German language contains many compound
nouns; the productivity of compound formation is in fact one of the
distinctive features of the language (Durrell 2002:476). Because many
German compounds are transparent in meaning to native speakers of
English, they could be excluded without major loss of coverage. For
example, a compound like *Gartenweg* 'garden path', which is
composed of the words *Garten* 'garden' and *Weg* 'path', can be
understood as well as produced if one knows the words *Garten* and
Weg, and for this reason it was not included in the word lists. A
compound like *Bürgersteig* 'pavement', however, is not transparent in
the same way (the meaning 'pavement' cannot be determined directly
from the meanings of *Bürger* 'citizen' and *Steig* 'steep path') and for
this reason was not excluded from the lists. Because of the natural
connections among the various topics and subtopics in this book, many
lexical items could have occurred in more than one unit, but do not in
order to avoid repetition and conserve space. The word *Spionage*
'spying, espionage', for example, would be appropriate under the
categories of law, war, and politics and international relations. Instead
of repeating this item in all three categories, it has been put only in the
category of politics and international relations.

Exercises

The exercises that follow the word lists in each unit are intended for
individual as well as classroom use. They are designed to aid and
reinforce the acquisition of the vocabulary in the lists by helping
students move from the passive stages of vocabulary acquisition to the
active stages, that is, from recognizing and understanding vocabulary to
using it appropriately in discourse.

   The exercises also provide students with examples of vocabulary in
use. Each unit contains at least one authentic German-language text
per exercise level that is used as the basis for an exercise. The sentences
used for the sentence-completion exercises are based on authentic text.
The English sentences that students are asked to translate into German
are also based on attested German sentences. Thus the results of such
translation exercises mirror authentic text. It is suggested that some
texts should be translated orally.

   The following list presents the most common types of exercises that
occur in *Using German Vocabulary* along with ways in which each
exercise type aids acquisition. These exercises all reinforce the work
done with word cards. To the extent that students use dictionaries to

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complete these exercises, they also promote dictionary use, which has
been shown to help students learn vocabulary and understand and
produce text (Luppescu and Day 1993; Knight 1994).

Exercise	*Benefit*
Matching words and definitions	Strengthens the form–meaning connection; exposes learners to German-language definitions.
Solving crossword puzzles	Strengthens the form–meaning connection; exposes learners to German-language definitions.
Matching associated words	Helps in understanding the full meaning of a word by focusing on its relationship to other words; helps in recalling a word or its meaning in appropriate contexts.
Building complex words	Helps learners retain knowledge about new complex words; strengthens knowledge about stems, affixes and word formation that can be used to learn words not previously encountered.
Filling word part tables	Reinforces knowledge about new complex words; reinforces knowledge about relationships among related vocabulary items.
Categorization of vocabulary	Helps integrate vocabulary knowledge with knowledge of subject matter.
Finding opposites or synonyms	Helps in understanding the full meaning of a word by focusing on its relationships to other words.
Completion of proportions	Helps reinforce and establish relationships among lexical items.
Differentiation of similar forms	Highlights differences between words that are similar in form; helps learners avoid common pitfalls.
Providing definitions	Strengthens the form–meaning connection.

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Identification of multiple meanings	Extends the learner's knowledge of individual lexical items; raises the learner's awareness of polysemy.
Matching collocates	Helps in acquiring the type of knowledge about words that can lead to fluent, native-like speech.
Sentence completion	Provides the opportunity to put vocabulary items in context; brings the learner closer to the production of entire sentences with new vocabulary items.
Translation of English or German idioms	Extends the learner's use of vocabulary items; raises the learner's awareness of the potential lack of a one-to-one correspondence between English and German idioms.
Translation of sentences into German	Provides the opportunity for learners to use vocabulary productively to produce sentence-level discourse; allows learners to focus on grammatical issues involved in vocabulary use.
Translation of German texts into English	Provides exposure to vocabulary in context; provides practice in determining meaning from context.
Summarizing German texts	Tests comprehension of vocabulary in context; provides the opportunity for learners to use vocabulary productively in text-level discourse.
Composition	Encourages learners to use vocabulary productively in text-level discourse.

Tips on learning vocabulary

Word cards. Put the words from the word lists on to small cards that can easily be carried around. Put the German word on one side (with

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gender and plural formation for nouns and principal parts for strong verbs) and the English translation on the other (native-language translations have been shown to be more effective than target-language translations; see Laufer and Shmueli 1997). Supplement the translations with pictures when possible, as this can improve learning (Nation 2001:304–305). Work with the cards first by looking at a German word and recalling its meaning; then work with the cards by looking at meanings and producing the German forms. Work with sets of cards that are manageable in size; use smaller sets for more difficult words. Change the order of the words as you work with them so that you can learn to recall each word independently. Because words that are similar in form and meaning can be more difficult to learn together than separately (Laufer 1989; Nation 2000; Tinkham 1997; Waring 1997) you should avoid including related words in the same set. For words that are difficult to remember, use a mnemonic link. For example, link the word to the sound of a word in English or German; note the meaning of part(s) of the word (for *Frühstück* 'breakfast' take the first part, *früh* 'early', and think of something like "an early bird at breakfast"); link the word to the situation in which it appeared (Cohen 1990:25–27). Say each word aloud as you work with it, as this can improve long-term memory (Ellis 1997). Work with your word cards on a regular (daily) basis.

Exercises. After you have learned the words in the word lists from one level in a given unit, complete the corresponding exercises. These exercises will reinforce the vocabulary you have learned and help you use this vocabulary. They will expose you to new vocabulary as well as help you identify the vocabulary that you need to review. Redo the exercises periodically to check and reinforce your long-term memory. Use dictionaries to help you complete the exercises; consult both bilingual and monolingual dictionaries. The Wortschatz-Lexikon (http://wortschatz.uni-leipzig.de) is an excellent online source for information about usage. It provides millions of sentence examples for German vocabulary and therefore contains much information about use that is not available in printed dictionaries.

Additional reading. Find additional texts related to the subject matter of the unit you are working on. Online newspapers and magazines are excellent sources of text that are easily accessible. Some of the many sites that are currently available are the following: FOCUS Online (http://focus.msn.de), FAZ.NET (http://www.faz.net), FRANKFURTER RUNDSCHAU online (http://www.fr-aktuell.de), GEO.de (http://www.geo.de), SPIEGEL ONLINE (http://www.spiegel.de), STERN (http://www.stern.de), SÜDDEUTSCHE ZEITUNG (http://www.sueddeutsche.de), DIE WELT online (http://www.welt.de), DIE ZEIT (http://www.zeit.de/).

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