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Reviewed work:

*Inside Reading: The Academic Word List in Context.* (2009). Cheryl Boyd Zimmerman (Series Ed.). New York: Oxford University Press. Pp. 744. ISBN: 9780194416122. \$28.95

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The *Inside Reading: The Academic Word List in Context* series comprises four textbooks with CDs and four instructor packs with test-making software. The series editor is Cheryl Boyd Zimmerman. The series is attractively presented and focuses on the connection between reading and learning academic vocabulary, in this case the Academic Word List (AWL; Coxhead, 2000). The AWL is a list of 570 word families that occur with reasonable frequency across a broad range of academic subjects, such as biology, history, and accounting. The list is useful for English for Academic Purposes (EAP) students and is divided into 10 sublists, with the 60 most frequent families of the list in Sublist 1, the next most frequent in Sublist 2, and so on. For more on the AWL, go to <http://language.massey.ac.nz/staff/awl/index.shtml> or see Coxhead (2000, 2006) or Nation (2001).

*Inside Reading* integrates findings from studies on second language reading (e.g., Carrell, Devine, & Eskey, 1988; Koda, 2005), vocabulary (Coxhead, 2000; Nation, 2001; Laufer, 2005; Schmitt & Zimmerman, 2002), and second language reading and vocabulary combined (Laufer, 1992) into carefully presented and well-organised units of work. The introductory unit for teachers at the beginning of each book clearly discusses and illustrates connections between applied linguistics research findings, teachers, learners, and the series. The readings provide useful contexts for the target vocabulary with a slant mostly towards U.S. topics.

The series is organised logically and follows similar approaches even though each book has a different author: Book 1 is written by Arline Burgmeier, Book 2 by Lawrence Zwier, Book 3 by Bruce Rubin, and Book 4 by Kent Richmond. Each unit contains two readings and follows roughly the same organisation: introduction of target words, self-rating of current levels of knowledge of these words, prereading questions, a reading of approximately two pages, reading comprehension, a reading strategy, and word and sentence level vocabulary work. The second reading is also followed by a discussion of the content of the readings, and then a list of related topics for writing and/or discussion. Some words from the readings are glossed, but the principles behind the selection of the glossed words are not clear. We also noticed that the reading strategies sometimes changed order in some units to allow for different strategies to be practised. For example, Unit 4 of Book 2 has a prereading strategy for the second reading. Another activity—making an outline of a reading that highlights the main points and details—in the same unit requires students to find an example of an outline on the Internet rather than providing an example in the text. Both these activities needed explanations—for the change in the first instance and the need to find an online outline (rather than in the book itself) in the second.

The range of reading strategies, including skimming, scanning, predicting, reading graphs and tables, identifying definitions, and finding main ideas, is quite wide and appears in different books within the series. For example, previewing is found in Books 1, 2, and 3, whereas skimming occurs in all four books. According to the Unit Tour, which explains the organisation and purpose of the contents of the units in the books, “readings [in the series] represent a variety of genres: newspapers, magazines, websites, press releases, encyclopedias, and books” (p. xi). We thought that the series provided a wide range of very interesting topics, such as readings about child prodigies in Book 2, debates in literature, such as whether Shakespeare penned his own plays, in Book 2, and stories of migrants to the US in Book 3. High interest readings are important to us because we are writing this review as EAP students and an EAP lecturer. For each of these topics there was also a solid amount of reading appropriate to the levels. The readings are comprehensible and are surrounded by plenty of white space, which is easy on the eyes. Pictures and illustrations that are relevant to the readings are included in the units.

We were concerned that at times the texts were not clearly referenced and did not seem to be very representative of academic reading at the undergraduate level, at least from our experience in a New Zealand university context. For example, there were 13 AWL words in the first reading in Unit 10, Book 1, out of approximately 800 words. We analysed the first two paragraphs of this reading and found that out of the 177 running words, 8 were from the AWL. This figure means that the number of AWL words in the text is approximately 5 every 100 words. This number contrasts with Coxhead’s (2000) finding that the AWL covered roughly 10% of the words in a corpus of 3,500,000 running words of written academic English. That is, roughly 10 AWL words occur every 100 words. In addition, long noun phrases that seem to characterise academic writing (Coxhead & Byrd, 2007) do not appear often in the readings. Here is an example from the reading mentioned earlier in this paragraph (the bolding represents the first occurrence of an AWL target word in the reading):

For more of human history, humans have had to live with the body that nature gave them. They lacked the knowledge to improve eyes that couldn’t see clearly, or help ears that

couldn't hear. Such disabilities were more than an inconvenience for early humans; they were a threat to their existence. A person with impaired vision might not be able to hunt or work with tools, for example. Over time, the **incentive** to survive led people to develop devices that would fix the **errors** in their own bodies (Burgmeier, 2009, p. 128).

We understand that the conflict between providing high interest readings that can provide both lexical instruction and practice for reading strategies can be difficult to manage. The primary aim of connecting reading and vocabulary is well achieved in this series, however.

The words of the AWL are approached in a serious and well principled way. Each 14 page unit presents 15 words from the AWL and the words are practised and recycled. In Unit 4 of Book 2, for example, *protocol* is a target word and is presented at least 20 times: once in a list, twice in reading texts, six times in a meaning-based exercise, three times in a collocation exercise, three times in explanations, twice in rubrics, and once each in exercises such as choosing the odd word out in a group of words, a reading comprehension question, and a sentence level vocabulary task. Another target word in the same unit, *accumulate*, occurs eight times in various ways. The vocabulary is treated very carefully within the units and students are encouraged to work on different aspects of knowing a word, both at word and sentence level. The books also encourage learners to consult their dictionaries. The authors focused on Nation's (2001, p. 29) description of lexical knowledge, that is *form*, *meaning*, and *use*, and made these concepts come alive through clear examples and plenty of practice. It is clear that Zimmerman's (2008) new book, *Word Knowledge*, informed the development of this series, as did her earlier work on the benefits of reading and interactive vocabulary instruction (Zimmerman, 1997) and learner knowledge about derivative word forms (Schmitt & Zimmerman, 2002).

The end-of-unit reflection on what the students know about the target word compared to what they knew before is very helpful. The AWL words are listed alphabetically at the end of each book, with the AWL sublist number listed next to each word along with the corresponding book and unit number. We felt this index would be very helpful for students and teachers, but a comparison across the books shows there is little repetition of words between units and books. Also, the reasons for the ordering of the words across the books are not obvious. For example, we noted that *notwithstanding* from Sublist 10 of the AWL is a target word in Book 2, but *research* and *require* from Sublist 1 (the most frequent 60 words of the AWL) appear in Book 4. The final sections of each unit provide writing and discussion activities, from online research projects through to writing prompts. We were not sure what the teacher and the students should do with the target vocabulary at this point. For example, Unit 7 on page 98 of Book 1 asks us to "think about all of the fast-food restaurants you have visited. In what ways are they the same? What are some differences?" Perhaps we missed the point of the activity and were looking for more guidance than we needed at this late stage in the unit.

We all liked the CDs from the student books. We found them easy to work with and thought that students would enjoy doing some self-study on a computer. The presentation and quality were extremely professional. The CDs allow students to focus on the AWL words in different ways through gapfills and reflection on the words and their uses. These exercises were helpful for learning, although in some places in the world, such as Papua New Guinea, where two of the authors of this review work, access to computers can be limited. Very helpfully, the instructor's

pack CD includes an answer key and a test generator. Teachers can customise the test questions to their class by choosing from a range of questions on target lexis and readings. This innovative use of technology would be interesting to explore with several teachers working in different classes to see if they selected similar or different questions from the CD for their classes.

Overall, we found that this series met its aims in supporting teachers and learners to develop their knowledge and understanding of the connection between reading and vocabulary. We would recommend *Inside Reading* to students and teachers working in classrooms, especially in the U.S. context. In particular, we felt it would be most suitable for students who are at the beginning of their preparation for undergraduate studies.

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