

B. Deirdre we've spoken a lot about how we help our students to learn and improve their English, but what would you say was the most difficult area?

D. Well students always complain about not knowing enough words.

B. Yeah I agree. In fact this problem gets worse as they reach higher levels and I can understand this because I've got such a bad memory and learning and retaining vocabulary is all about memory.

D. But what does it actually mean to know a word. It's not just about definition is it?

B. No it's about all sorts of things: how you pronounce it, how you spell it.

D. How you use it with other words and in what context it's appropriate.

B. And how can we remember all this.

D. Well people talk a lot about word associations as a tool for remembering new vocabulary, what can you say about that?

B. There are lots of things people can do. One example is the word 'rough', spelt R O U G H, with a very different pronunciation which is easily forgotten. If you associate it with something that sounds similar like 'enough' or 'stuff' and memorise a phrase like 'this stuff is rough enough' you won't forget it.

D. Another thing is that we're all different so we don't need to remember the same types of words do we?

B. Exactly. For example I was recently teaching a doctor and she needed a lot of lexis associated with her job that wasn't relevant to the other students. We also need to remember that there's a difference between knowing a word actively and receptively.

D. By that you mean we often understand a word if we read it or hear it but we may not need to use it in our speaking or writing.

B. That's right. And that's also true in our native language.

D. So what we're saying is that the key to increasing your vocabulary is not just learning it but learning HOW to learn it!!

B. Yes and to find out more why don't you come to our workshops on this subject at the BC.