THE MOST AWESOME WORD LIST YOU HAVE EVER SEEN

Wet → Pond → Lily Pad → Slimy → Green → Frog → Tongue → To Eat → Fly

by

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Your first 625 words

Welcome to the Most Awesome Word List You Have Ever Seen! These words will form the foundation of your language. They're some of the most frequent words you'll encounter in any language, and they're all relatively easy to learn using pictures. In addition, because these words are grouped together into stories, they will be much easier to memorize when compared with the typical word lists that you find in language textbooks and classrooms, where you learn colors one day, types of vegetables the next day, members of the family the following day, etc.

What's the story behind these lists?

The research on this topic revolves around the concept of interference.[1] Here's the idea: Suppose you're living in Paris, taking a beginning French class. One day, you learn a bunch of fruit names: une pomme (apple), une poire (pear), une pêche (peach). A few days later, you see an apple at a fruit stand and try to recall the word in French. Your brain jumps into action, looking for your word through several possible routes. It's a fruit! It's a French word I learned a few days ago! It starts with a P!

And because you happened to learn three French fruits that start with the letter P (and all on the same day), you're kind of screwed. Memories compete. When you try to recall your word, your three French fruits get into a kind of mental tug-of-war, while you try to figure out which one

seems the most apple-like. As a result, you'll have a harder time remembering pomme, and even if you do remember, you'll take much longer to find it.

And unfortunately, that's not even the end of the story. While you're having this mental fight, you've probably just made the situation a little worse for next time. Every time you think of two things at once, they interconnect. So if you're busy thinking about pommes, poires and pêches, and you're not particularly sure which one's which, then you're jumbling those three fruits together into a messy jam of "Fairly confusing French fruits that start with the letter P." You'll be more likely to remember all three fruits the next time you try to retrieve the word for pear or peach.

I've run into this problem quite a bit on my own, especially in French, where I learned a lot of similar words at the same time. I still have problems remembering whether sept is 6 or 7, or whether jaune is yellow or green.

Looking at the numbers

The concept of interference has been researched in a lot of different contexts, and I've linked five related studies at the end of this article, if you'd like to read more.

One of the first studies (Waring, 1997) gave test subjects a group of three to six words and their "translations" into a fake foreign language (apple = tisahl, pear = nugaw), and recorded how

1 For more on interference, check out this Wikipedia article: En.wikipedia.org/wiki/Interference_theory

long it took each subject to memorize the trans-lations. Half of the subjects got a group of closely related words (jacket, shirt, sweater), and half got unrelated words (frog, car, rain). The researchers would quiz subjects (what's the word for "jacket"?) until they could remember every new translation within three seconds ('jacket' is…ummm…iddek!), and recorded the number of times they needed to repeat the tests until a subject successfully memo-rized a word. These are their results:

Repetitions

Similar words took more than 35% longer to learn, at 11.3 repetitions for a group of similar words, compared to 7.2 repetitions for a group of unrelated words. This isn't particularly efficient.

Still, time isn't everything. What about reten-tion? Once you memorize a group of similar or unre-lated words, how well do they stick?

In a 2008 study, researchers tested these ideas in a school, teaching Turkish kids 40 unrelat-ed English words (peg, key, rat, sun) and 40 related words (20 foods and 20 animals) in a classroom setting, and testing them afterwards on how well they could match English words and pictures. They tested them immediately after each lesson

and again one week later. In both cases, the kids had a harder time remembering similar words:
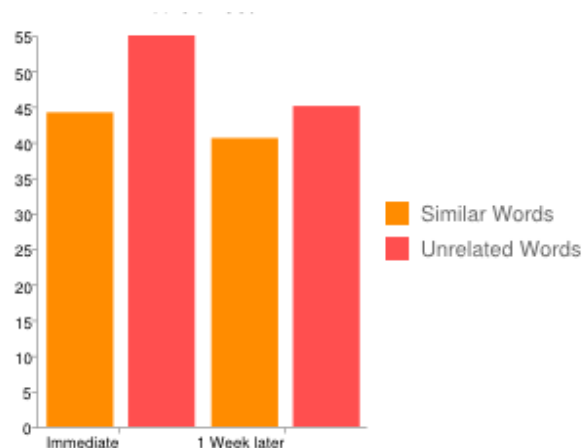
And they took longer to finish every similar-word quiz, taking an average of 5.8 minutes to fin-ish, compared to 4.9 minutes for unrelated-word quizzes.

So What Are Our Options, Then?

When you go by the numbers, learning similar words at the same time is a terrible idea. Granted, it feels a lot more comfortable; you can feel like you've accomplished something whenever you learn new words (I learned all the colors today!), but given the detrimental effects it has on learning, we need some other options. So what are our alternatives?

In most studies, the alternative to word groups involved learning a jumble of totally un-related words, and that works quite well. If you've browsed through my website or Appendix 5 of my book, you've probably run across my list of 625 words to learn in every language.

The first version of that list was presented in typical groups (animals, professions, etc.), but based upon the research, I started playing around with the idea of an alphabetical list. Normally, an alphabetical list would solve the similar word problem at the expense of adding a new problem: the words would all sound similar. But if you start with an alphabetical list in English and then translate it into your target language, you basically create a randomly ordered list anyway. So I put my English word list in alphabetical order, translated it into Hungarian, and learned that list. In practice, I found that memorizing words was much easier. I stopped getting my greens confused with my yellows (although I still get six confused with seven; I didn't follow my own advice when it came to numbers, and Hungarian's six and seven – hat and hét – are extremely similar looking).

Alphabetical lists are also a lot easier to use; I could just skim through a Lonely Planet Phrasebook, circle my A-words, then circle my B-words, and after 30 minutes, I had good translations for every word in my list. As such, I decided to supply an alphabetical list in my book and added an alphabetical list to my website.

But alphabetical and random orders aren't an especially satisfying way to learn ("I learned 10 random words today" is not as rewarding as "I learned all the fruits today!"), and fortunately, they're not our only options. In one of the earliest studies, researchers tried out groups of words that shared the same theme. These are words that tell a story – sweater, wool, navy blue, striped, changing room, try on, cash register– rather than words that fit in the same category, like sweater, shirt, jacket, and coat. They're related words, rather than similar words, and there's a huge difference between them.

Learning related words – words that form stories – worked even better than totally random words. Subjects needed approximately 10% fewer repetitions to learn a group of words like "frog, hop, slimy, pond, croak, and green," when compared with "cloud, erase, social, office, lose, and risky":

Number of repetitions
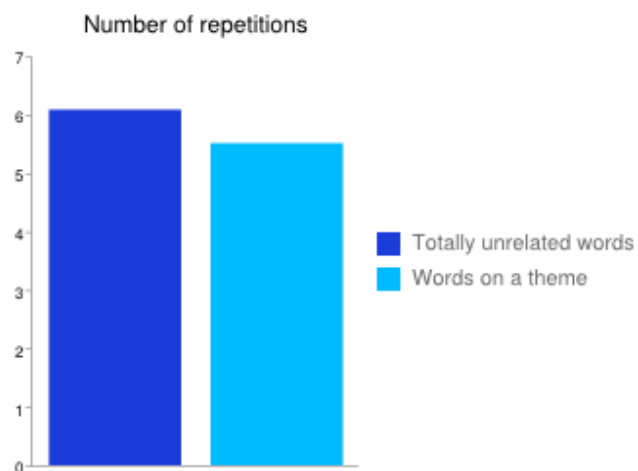
Why? When you learn related words, they form close associations with each other – frog connects with green and pond. These associations will help you remember the cluster of words later.

This happened with your three French fruits – pomme, poire and pêche – too, but in that case, the words were so similar that they interfered with each other; you couldn't remember which was which.

In our frog story, however, the words are all different enough that you won't have trouble confusing them, and so the net result is a set of words that's easier to remember. These sets of words can also provide you with the sense of accomplishment that's missing from random or alphabetical lists ("I learned the slimy-green-frog story today!"). This makes the learning process more fun, which makes you more likely to stick with it.

What's this list and how do I use it?

This is the exact same list of 625 words that I provide in Appendix 5 of the book and on my website. The primary difference is that I've grouped those words into 89 little stories that will help build associations between those words and make them faster to memorize, easier to retain long term, and more fun to study. I've also commissioned illustrations of each of those stories to further reinforce the associations between the words (and to make the word lists much more pleasant to use).

To save you some time, I've also commissioned professional translators to go through the 625 word lists and give you good, common translations for each word, accurate phonetic transcriptions, gender and/or counter words (when appropriate to the language) and added commentary when there are a few different translations that could be used for a given English word.

Use this list in the exact same way you'd use a random or alphabetical list, as I describe on my website and in Chapter 4 of the book.[2] Learn each of your words individually, on its own terms. Play Spot-the-Differences with Google Images and discover what makes French grenouilles different from English frogs. Find personal connections for vert (green) and use mnemonics to remember the genders of your étangs (ponds). This process will build up memorable associations within each word, and make those words much easier to recall long term. By virtue of the fact that you're learning words like woman at the same time as you're learning to wear and skirt, you'll find that those words stick even better, because they'll naturally form associations with each other. Those associations will be further reinforced by the illustrations on top of each page.[3] All in all, this word list will help you learn your first 625 words faster, and make that process substantially more fun. Enjoy!

Sources for further reading[4]

- Effects on vocabulary acquisition of presenting new words in semantic sets versus semantically unrelated sets (Erten, 2008)

- Semantic category effects in second language word learning (Finkbeiner, 2003)

- The negative effects of learning words in semantic sets: A replication (Waring 1997)

- The effects of semantic and thematic clustering on the learning of second language vocabulary (Tinkham, 1997)

2 If you're using Anki, you'll find a guide to the flashcards you'll be using here: http://fluent-forever.com/gallery/simple-word-flashcards
3 Remember, you'll be playing Spot-The-Differences and finding your own illustrations for each word in this list. The illustrations you'll find throughout this list are only here to help reinforce the associations between your words and make them easier to remember.
4 I'll try to keep updated, non-pay walled links to these articles on this page: http://fluent-forever.com/efficient-way-to-learn-vocabulary

Cantonese

地球・天空・上・月亮・一・白色・點・星

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Cantonese Word	Part of Speech (and counter)	Jyutping	IPA Pronunciation	English Translation	Reference Link	Notes
地球	noun (個-Go3)	Dei6Kau4	tei6 kʰɐu4	Earth	Canto	
天空	noun (片-Pin3)	Tin1Hung1	tʰiːn1 hʊŋ1	sky	Canto	
上	preposition	Soeng6	sœːŋ6	up	Canto	
月亮	noun (個-Go3)	Jyut6Loeng6	jyːt6 lœːŋ6	moon	Canto	
一	card. number	Jat1	jɐt1	1	Canto	
白色	noun	Baak6Sik1	pɑːk6 sɪk1	white	Canto	
點	noun (點-Dim2)	Dim2	tiːm2	dot	Canto	
星	noun (粒-Lap1)	Sing1	sɪŋ1	star	Canto	1

1 [星] – The given counter is more common in spoken Cantonese, and "顆" ("Fo2") in the written language.
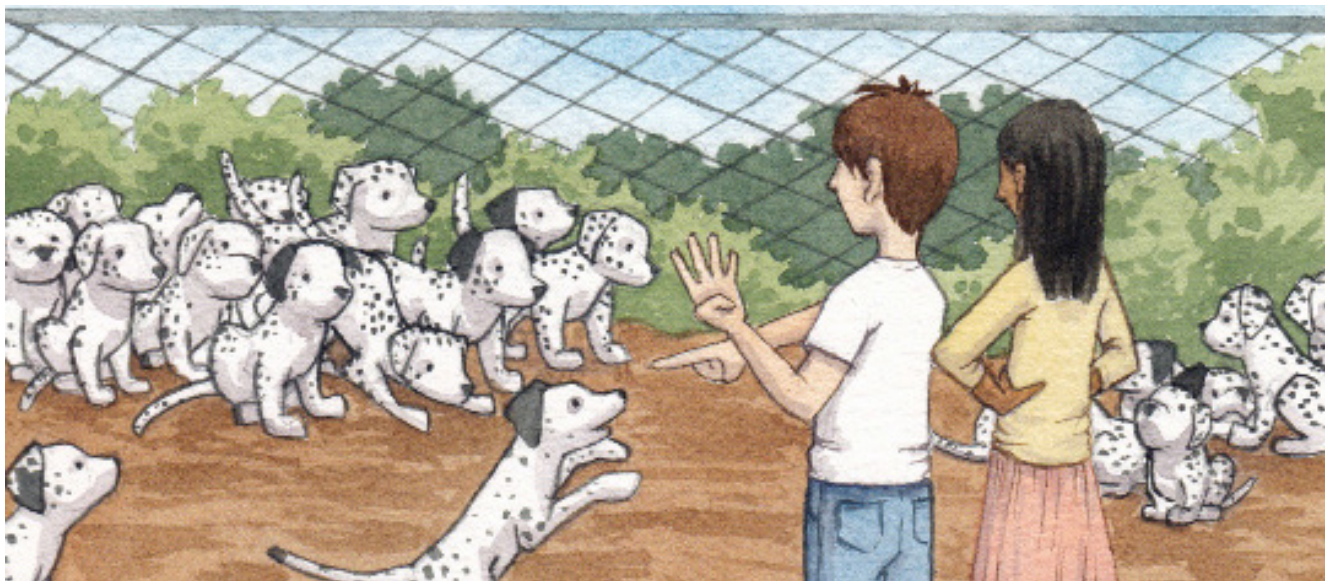
星期五 • 侍應 • 企 • 背脊 • 痛

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Cantonese Word	Part of Speech (and counter)	Jyutping	IPA Pronunciation	English Translation	Reference Link	Notes
星期五	noun	Sing1Kei4Ng5	sɪŋ1 kʰei4 ŋ5	Friday	Canto	
侍應	noun (個-Go3)	Si6Jing3	siː6 jɪŋ3	waiter	Canto	1
企	verb	kei5	kʰei5	to stand	Canto	2
背脊	noun (個-Go3)	bui3zek3	puːi3 tsɛːk3	back (body)	Canto	3
痛	noun	Tung3	tʰʊŋ3	pain	Canto	

1 [侍應] – Formal: 侍應生 (Jyutping – Si6Jing3Sang1, IPA – siː6 jɪŋ3 sɐŋ1). The given counter is more common in spoken Cantonese, and "位" ("Wai2") in the written language.
2 [企] - Formal: 站立 (Jyutping – Zaam6Laap6, IPA – tsɑːm6 lɑːp6).
3 [背脊] - Formal: 背部 (Jyutping – Bui3Bou6, IPA – puːi3 pou6).

數數 ● 一百零一 ● 後生(嘅) ● 狗 ● 公園 ● 跳
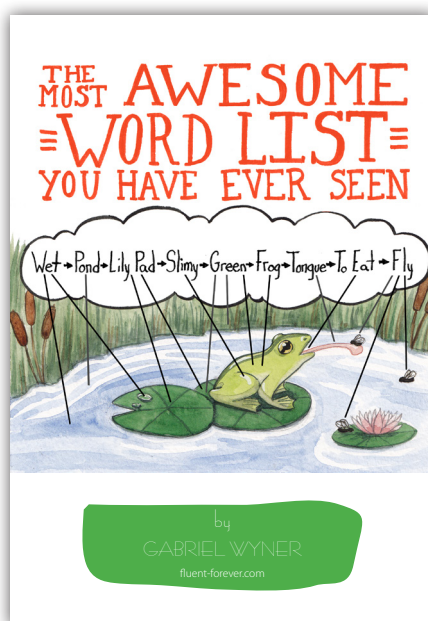

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Cantonese Word	Part of Speech (and counter)	Jyutping	IPA Pronunciation	English Translation	Reference Link	Notes
數數	verb	Sou2Sou3	sou2sou3	to count	Canto	
一百零一	card. number	Jat1Baak6Ling-4Jat1	jɛt1 pɑːk6 lɪŋ4 jɛt1	101	Canto	
後生(嘅)	adjective	hau6saang1 (ge3)	haːu6saːŋ1 (kɛː3)	young	Canto	1
狗	noun (隻-Zek3)	Gau2	kɐu2	dog	Canto	
公園	noun (個-Go3)	Gung1Jyun2	kʊŋ1 jyːn2	park	Canto	
跳	verb	Tiu3	tʰiːu3	to jump	Canto	

1 [後生(嘅)] - Formal: 年輕(的) (Jyutping – Nin4Hing1(dik1), IPA – niːn4 hɪŋ1*hɛːŋ1 (kɛː3)).

The Most **AWESOME WORDLIST** You Have Ever Seen

. . . .

"Thank you for previewing The Most Awesome Word List Ever.

The complete pre-translated list is just a click away, at

https://fluent-forever.com/product/most-awesome-word-lists-ever-seen/