HOW TO (RE-)LEARN WORDS:

GUIDELINES FOR LEXICAL CONSOLIDATION

Every time you (re-)learn a new word, make sure you:

a. look it up on a good corpus-based dictionary (like COBUILD), then search for it on the web to study how it is used in context;
b. know its frequency: master FREQUENTLY-used expressions for active use, NOT fancy, rare ones
c. know exactly what it means (denotation and connotation, register, etc)
d. know how to pronounce it properly (stress, etc.)
e. know how to use it (in a sentence, etc.)
f. compare it to some useful synonyms, antonyms, and related words, and understand their different nuances
g. know some idiomatic and clever way to translate it in a few different contests
h. master at least 5 collocations/phrases/patterns using that word, and memorise some recyclable productive frames into which you can slot words to make your own sentences

= MULTI-WORD UNITS: language consists to a large extent of PREFABRICATED CHUNKS (Lewis, 1997)

> even truer of the routinised language we encounter in technical or political speeches!

• CREATION OF A DEDICATED ACTIVE VOCAB NOTEBOOK:

a. Record whole expressions containing the HEADWORD (= the word of interest) ;
b. Start with the expression you initially encounter, and then find more;
c. Useful methods:
   - collocation dictionaries and corpus-based advanced learner dictionaries
   - authentic texts
   - relevant websites, targeting your search (ex. ‘site:europa.eu’)
   - online corpora (ex. COBUILD, BNC, Time magazine corpus of American English)
   - ‘web-as-corpus’ query and concordance tools (ex. IATE, Linguee.com)
   - asking native speakers.

NB: DO NOT RECORD ALL THE EXPRESSIONS you find. Look for:

a. strong and frequent collocations;
b. patterns that are new to you;
c. expressions and frames that look particularly useful;
d. words and phrases which seem difficult to translate into your A language.