

NUFS Workshop 2008

Newsletter No. 1

Workshop in May (Day 1)

Date: May 10, 2008, 13:00-16:00

Venue: Nagoya University of Foreign Studies, Room 322

Instructor: Juanita Heigham (Sugiyama Jogakuen University)

Title: 'Vocabulary Study: Making It Efficient and Effective'

The number of participants: 33

Abstract: Without question, vocabulary study is an essential part of language learning. Understanding the meaning of words and how to use them correctly is key to successful communication. But what is the "best" way to help our students build their vocabulary? And what are the "most important" words for them to learn? There are no easy answers to these questions, but together we will consider the questions. We will then address some basic ways that we can help our students make their study of English vocabulary both efficient and effective.



1. Interesting activities you might want to use in your class. Why?

- 'Word Trees' and 'Word Forks' – When I was correcting my students' exams, I realized that they didn't understand the word orders well even though they know how to spell the word in a right way. That's why I thought 'Word Forks' might be a good idea to help them write sentences.
- I think to associate words with new vocabulary is a good way to personalize words and an easy way for students to remember.
- I liked the Word Fork and the Word Tree activities. They were fun to work on in a group, everyone helped with their idea.
- 'What am I' activity, because the students can use a lot of words and I think that it has effects on speaking and listening abilities.
- 'Learning Style Preference Survey' seems very good to use in the class, because it is important for the students to be aware of his/her style.
- Associations, because it enables students personalize their vocabulary learning. An activity to transfer from one picture to another, because it really activates our brains by trying to link the vocabulary to a new picture (situation).
- 'Word Trees' and 'Word Forks' are useful to remember words. Most junior high school students can't understand part of speech, so I want to use 'Making words Cards' to let the students remember the new words.
- 2000 Words List let students cross out the words that they already know, and find the words remained, which words they should add into the meaning phrases that they make, and in a pair, exchange information.

2. What you learned from today's workshop.

- I learned 'vocabulary study' is not boring at all. We can find several interesting activities to learn vocabulary. Also, I learned that it's good to know our 'learning style'. Everybody is different, and their learning style is, too. I thought I should know my students' learning style.
- I realized that there are many ways to teach vocabulary: an auditory, a visual and a kinesthetic way. I'll try to use these ways in my class.
- The importance of 'syllables'. Reflecting on my lessons, I'm afraid I didn't pay my attention on syllables. When students read text in the class, I always find them much poorer in reading aloud than in doing other activities. They put unnecessary sound to English words. I'll put more emphasis on syllables.
- To teach a part of speech is very important. I haven't thought it related deeply to grammar.
- Every word has a part of speech and can connect with practical communication for learners. Teachers have to realize this viewpoint and make teaching plan.
- I learned that it is important to give students options of vocabulary learning styles. This would give more variety of vocabulary teaching.
- It's important for English teachers to cultivate students' sense of collocations. So through introducing new words, we should teach students word associations.



3. Has your perspective on learning vocabulary changed?

- Yes, greatly. I want to make a deep research into vocabulary learning.
- Yes, I found there is no best way to learn vocabulary, so a teacher has to give students many different models.
- Yes, it has. No more just asking students to memorize words. I like the idea of writing the word and also telling students what it is: adjective, noun, verb, etc. It's useful.
- Yes, I can now think of lots of ideas of learning vocabulary. I've learned how important to be aware of the word family.
- Vocabulary teaching is one part of language teaching that has long been ignored, and it has been thought to be students' responsibility to work on it. I have been frustrated by this situation, but I didn't know how to change this. Now I have big hints for improvement.
- Yes. In that I feel comfortable with concepts of how and what to teach and the associated teaching methods.
- Yes. My perspective on learning vocabulary has changed greatly. I didn't know that the 2000 words can help the students communicate in various situations.
- Yes, a lot. I have wanted to tell students tips and hints about learning vocabulary. Today's talk



gave me some ideas about it.

4. Questions and Answers

Q (1): What is the goal of vocabulary learning? Is it to be able to write with a correct spelling, or to be able to recognize it in a passage both spoken and written?

Since we are teaching English as an academic subject, we can't really limit the goal of vocabulary learning; we have to look at it globally. Students need to be able to understand a word when it's spoken or written, and they need to be able to write it themselves – which means that they need to be able to spell it. However, I'm more interested in my students understanding the meaning of words than their ability to spell them perfectly. (This is in part because there are English words that I know the meaning of, but I don't know how to spell!) To me what's most important is for students to learn to recognize the words and to know their meaning *and* to know how to use a dictionary to help them spell correctly when they write.

Q (2): I'm wondering if students understand well enough about part of speech. Do you take time to explain the function of each part of speech? If students know how each part is used in a sentence, it is surely effective to identify each word.

Since I teach university students, most of my students already understand basic grammar, so they know the parts of speech. However, for some of you, especially junior high school teachers, you are teaching students their first grammar, so they wouldn't know the parts of speech yet. Thus, I think that you have to consider the knowledge base of your students to decide how to approach this. Probably the rule of thumb should be that if students already know the basic parts of speech through their grammar lessons, you should definitely help the students apply that knowledge to new vocabulary. However, if they don't know the parts of speech yet, it might confuse them.

Q (3): Two thousand words might be enough for daily communication, to be sure, however, is it really enough to read newspapers? I think more words must be necessary for reading today's typical magazines and newspapers.



To understand everything in a newspaper? No. To understand a good portion of every article? Yes. The tricky part is this: even when we know 80% of a text (the 2000 most frequently used words), there is still 20% we don't know. Sometimes that 20% is VERY important, and without it (or part of it), we can't fully understand something. Please don't be misled thinking that these 2000 words can take care of all English needs! You're right to be skeptical. However, these words are indeed the foundation of English and therefore, should be the starting point for our students.

Q (4): Do you think it is OK to promote katakana pronunciation to lower level or junior high school students?

I think that the best thing you can do for your students is to take the time to teach them the phonetic

alphabet. Knowing these symbols can be a useful tool for them for the rest of their years of English study, so it's worth the time spent! But students will have to study the *sounds*, not just the symbols. One way to help them do this is to make tapes or MP3 files for students to use at home, to go along with a list of the symbols. Here is a website that you can refer to. (It's not particularly user-friendly, but it's free!)

<http://www.antimoon.com/how/pronunc-soundsipa.htm>

Whatever you do, try to avoid katakana. Katakana cannot accurately describe English sounds. The katakana-ized words students hear in their minds will be different from what they hear when they hear real English, so promoting katakana use can actually impede students' listening progress – not to mention their speaking. I know that trying not to use katakana will be a challenge, so good luck with this!

Q (5): As vocabulary is progressive in that it expands. Would you start teaching the 100 most frequent words and then progress to the second stage 200 most frequent words...? Is there a learning style preference surely for children?

I have not read any research on teaching small children vocabulary specifically from the 2000 wordlist. From what I understand, the 2000 words are based on English used by adults, so they would differ some from what small children typically use. However, my feeling is that the list should certainly be a reference for building lessons. You'd have to use your own judgment about what words from the list to focus on because some words (like *percent* or *political*) wouldn't be relevant for them, but others would be.

Q (6): Do you teach learning strategies related to vocabulary?

I teach learning strategies first and foremost to my students. I want them to be thinking about their learning and maximizing the energy they spend studying. As soon as you think your students have the basic metacognitive skills necessary for making small decisions about their learning, I hope that you will introduce them to some learning strategies as well. (Suzanne Bonn will be doing a NUFs workshop that will give you some ideas for this.) As for teaching vocabulary specifically, I try to introduce students to a variety of ways they can study it so that they can choose the ways that work best for them.



Q (7): Do you think students have to spell words correctly? We teachers tend to put more emphasis on spelling correctly than pronouncing correctly. In my opinion, it is enough for students to pronounce a word correctly and understanding its meaning.

This question is related to number one above. Basically, I think that if students have enough visual recognition of word to 1) recognize it when they see it, and 2) be able to find it in a dictionary, they know enough. However, without doing some spelling practice, students won't gain this level of visual recognition. So, some time should be given to spelling, but not so much that time for other important things is dramatically reduced.

Q (8): Some of my students memorize words or idioms to pass the entrance exam. And some of them hate English. Both do not like doing activities. How can I make them enjoy studying English?

Helping students find *interesting and effective* ways for them to study vocabulary will certainly increase the enjoyment they experience in their study time. Learning vocabulary takes time, and students have to study words; there is no way to escape it. However, the way that they do it can match their learning styles. Listening to music while they study. Making recordings of the words and their definitions (instead of reading them off a page). Creating colorful word cards. These are just a few ways that students might personalize their study – and increase their enjoyment and their learning power!

Workshop in May (Day 2)

Date: May 11, 2008, 9:30-12:30

Venue: Aichi Kenko Plaza, Conference Room 3

The number of participants: 31

Instructor: Hiromi Tsuji (Gifu Municipal Business High School)

Advisors: Kazuyoshi Sato, Nancy Mutoh (Nagoya University of Foreign Studies)

Title: Orientation for Action Research

Abstract: After the brief explanation on action research by Yoshi, Ms. Tsuji made a presentation about her action research she did last year. After that, the participants discussed their own action research plan in groups. Yoshi and Nancy joined the groups and gave them some advice.



Workshop in June (Schedule)

(Part1)

Date: June 14, 2008, 10:30-14:30

Venue: Nagoya NSC College, Room 52

Instructor: Kazuyoshi Sato

Title: 'From a Lesson Plan to Curriculum Development'

(Part 2)

Date: June 14, 2008, 14:30-17:00

Venue: Nagoya NSC College, Room 52

Advisors: Kazuyoshi Sato, Nancy Mutoh

Abstract: Group discussion

Please email Chihaya ([chiha143\(at-mark\)nufs.ac.jp](mailto:chiha143@nufs.ac.jp)) if you can attend this workshop.