

## NUFS Workshop 2011

# Newsletter No. 6

## Workshop in October

(Part 1)

**Date:** October 15, 2011, 10:30-14:30

**Venue:** Nagoya University of Foreign Studies, Room 322

**Instructor:** Mathew White (NUFS)

**Title:** “An Integrated Approach to Vocabulary Acquisition”

**Abstract:** The aim of this workshop is to explore ways in which teachers can effectively facilitate their students’ acquisition of vocabulary. The author Evelyn Waugh is credited with the quote, “One forgets words as one forgets names. One’s vocabulary needs constant fertilizing or it will die.” More than merely wishing to preserve our students’ vocabularies, we wish for them to grow and mature. In an integrated approach to vocabulary learning, vocabulary is a core consideration in the development of materials and lesson plans. Assignments and activities are designed to assist students in understanding and using words flexibly and appropriately in many different contexts. Deep word knowledge is achieved through multiple, varied, and rich experiences with target vocabulary. Come and experience some ways to make words “stick”.



**The number of participants: 25**

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

- Story cubes, Hot seat – As for ‘story cubes’, we can do this using cards, but the students got more fun when they use some toys or tools in the classroom. These two games can have students speak English fluently.
- I’d like to try the activities where students pick words from a word list and explain it to their partners. This seems like an engaging activity which generates a lot of highly communicative language.
- I want to use ‘non-stop speaking’ with story cubes or flash cards because with pictures it’s easy to think about the vocabulary meanings and make stories. Today it was very fun to make creative stories with partners. Although it was a little bit difficult, we could help each other and enjoyed them.
- Using ‘Wordle’ for visual learners. Some students are fed up with the word lists to remember. This is a fun way to present the words with great impacts.
- ‘Hot seat’ activity is nice. My students are JHS students, so they can use only simple sentences. They repeat the same pattern sentences which are meaningful to them for a minute. Probably it will work well to acquire the key sentences.



## 2. What you learned from today's workshop.

- I learned how to build up the students' level of vocabulary, and got some good activities.
- Teachers have to keep the vocabulary fertilized. Recycling the vocabulary is the best way to learn.
- "The most effective way of beginning to learn the meaning of a word is by translation into the first language" – It's a little surprising because nowadays Japanese English teachers are told to use as much English as possible in classes and try students understand English in English.
- Let students speak out is important activity. And teachers have students read a lot and watch DVDs to increase students' vocabulary. Students need English shower to do output.
- I often think about grammar activities, but I haven't thought of vocabulary activities so deeply. I'll make more communicative activities which emphasize vocabulary.
- We have so many things to do in class and tend to omit the time to do something for vocabulary learning. I realized that vocabulary knowledge is the most important for reading comprehension. I want to do something for vocabulary every day for my students.



## 3. Questions and Answers

**Q (1): Sometimes I hear English majors say that they are losing language skills they built in the first and second year in college in the third and fourth years. What's the situation in your school?**

**A:** I've found it to be true in Japan that many 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year students have few or no English classes at all (even when they are majoring in English!) I can't speak for every department, but at least in our department students still have extensive listening and reading classes and writing and presentation classes in their third year, along with classes on teaching English, etc. For many students in their fourth year, they have little more than their seminar classes for English. However, students have the freedom to audit classes or simply join in on them. In addition, many of our students make friends with the foreign students here, so they have a chance to interact.

**Q (2): Do your students watch movies with/without Japanese subtitles, English subtitles, or nothing?**

**A:** I leave the decisions about subtitles up to individual students. Personally, I think it all depends on how much they are relying on the subtitles and for what purpose. Actually, it can be interesting to note the ways in which the things actually said in the films are translated for the subtitles. It can be like a mini simultaneous interpretation class. However, the main goal is to eventually be able to sit down in a movie theater or TV and be able to watch without subtitles of any kind.

**Q (3): Are your students expected to reach a certain level (i.e. in terms of number of lexical items) by the end of each term/school year? If so, is it from a pre-chosen list?**

**A:** We don't have a set goal at this time. I do think we should hold students accountable for learning vocabulary, and in almost every course I teach, they are given a vocabulary pre-test, vocabulary quizzes, and a vocabulary post-test to see how much they have improved. As a department, I would like to see us create target vocabulary lists for each semester.

**Q (4): Is there a difference between how we should approach teaching/learning the 2000<sup>th</sup> most frequent word and the 2001<sup>st</sup> most frequent word?**

**A:** The main thing to keep in mind is that the students will keep seeing the most frequent words in texts they read because they are in fact the most frequent. Therefore, they are worth spending time and effort learning because they will encounter them a lot. In addition, the frequent encounters with these words means that they will have more chances to deepen their understanding of those words, their forms and collocations, their varied pronunciations, etc. With any word NOT on the 2000



word list, learners and educators have to decide whether it is a word that we should put effort into learning or not. Words that aren't in the most frequent 2000 are less likely to be seen or heard, so there are less encounters for spaced retrieval. Students will have to read a lot more or listen to many more audio materials in order to encounter the words again, gain deeper understanding of the words, and keep them in their memories. Once students have learned the most frequent 2000, research suggests that they would benefit most from moving onto the 570 word families in the Academic Word List. As Nation points out in *Learning Vocabulary in Another Language*, knowing the 2000 words plus the Academic word list would move a student from having one unknown word in every five words of an academic text to having one word in every 10 words unknown. However, if the learner knows the most frequent 2000 and then moves on to the third 1000 most frequent, instead of an additional 10% coverage or understanding, there would only be an extra 4.3% coverage. Simply put, the next target after the most frequent 2000 should be the Academic Word List.

**Q (5): To tell the definition of new words, how do the teachers support? When giving Japanese meaning doesn't help students, how can I teach the word? Also when the English definition is too difficult, how can I make the test to know if the students learn the word or not?**

**A:** I believe one of the best ways to help students is to provide a sample context. Hopefully, the words are going to be found in a text or in a scene from a movie, etc. I make use of the materials the students are reading or listening to as part of the curriculum and use the examples already provided. When I provide additional listening or reading materials, the words are often encountered again in different forms, which gives students more chances to notice the words and the ways in which they are used.

**Q (6): It might be difficult for beginners to explain the meanings in English. How can they do this?**

**A:** Explaining is a skill and so is “talking around words”. I think it's helpful if the students get lots of practice trying to explain words. You might begin with a list of Japanese words (oden, otoshidama, etc.) and have students take turns trying to explain these words to their partners. This is a very realistic activity, as Japanese would have to explain these to host families in other countries or people visiting. They could also try drawing or using gestures.



**Q (7): Can junior high school students have non-stop speaking with story cubes like we did? If so, what aids do we need to use?**

**A:** I think they can. It might help to have the teacher or ALT give a demonstration first. You might also want to go over the symbols on the story cubes as a class, or provide a handout with possible interpretations. For example, here are some possible meanings for the tree symbol: tree, forest, wood, wooden, leaves, fall, nature.

**Q (8): How do you handle the low-motivated students? When we do some games in class, these students seemed to be fun. Please tell me some good skill or technique.**

**A:** Hmm... I usually try to engage students with music, films, and mystery. Even students with low motivation are curious. Crossword puzzles are great for this. Even many adults love crossword puzzles. For some easy ones, try <http://iteslj.org/cw/> Sometimes I write a riddle on the board. For example, "Almost everyone needs it, and yet almost nobody takes it, even when it is available. What is it?" I'll write the answer to this at the bottom.

**Q (9): Besides Paul Nation's book, can you suggest any books on vocabulary teaching and learning or good books that promote and recycle vocabulary words throughout the book?**

**A:** Here are some books on teaching and learning vocabulary that I like: *Vocabulary* by John Morgan and Mario Rinvolucri (Oxford: Resource Books for Teachers) ISBN 0-19-437091-7, *How to Teach Vocabulary* by Scott Thornbury (Pearson Education) ISBN 0-582-42966-8, and *Lexicon Building Notebook* by Kaplan International.

(Part 2)

**Date:** October 15, 2011, 14:30-17:00

**Venue:** Nagoya NSC College

**Advisors:** Kazuyoshi Sato, Nancy Mutoh (NUFS)

**Abstract:** Monthly report on action research

**The number of participants:** 13



## **Workshop in November (Schedule)**

**Date:** November 12, 2011, 10:30-14:30 (Part 1), 14:30-17:00 (Part 2)

**Venue:** Nagoya NSC College

**Instructors:** Marc Helgesen (Miyagi Gakuin Women's College)

**Title:** "English Language Teaching and the Science of Happiness: Positive Psychology in the ELT classroom"

**Please email Chihaya ([chiha143\(at-mark\)nufs.ac.jp](mailto:chiha143(at-mark)nufs.ac.jp)) to participate in this workshop.**