

Accountability and variety in extensive reading

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A proposal for a basic research writing course for Japanese university programs

The authors propose an academic writing curriculum for Japanese university programs that includes basic academic writing and ends with beginning and advanced research paper writing.

Conclusion

Since Japanese university departments often require students to write a research paper, students should be taught how to do it. Yet, beyond this, the teaching of research paper writing has compelling merits of its own and should be a valued part of the university curriculum.

CHALLENGING



ASSUMPTIONS

Accountability and variety in extensive reading

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多読が第二言語習得に効果があることは広く認識されているが、教室での実施において最適な方法であるかについては同意に至っていない。授業での持続的黙読の利点はこれまでに述べられているが、理論的にも実用的にも適当ではない場合もある。本稿は、その理由を簡潔に述べ、不適切なアウトプット・アクティビティーを回避することについて検討する。学生に既読の内容を表現させることと、多読授業の単調な反復を回避することが、多読教材開発に不可欠な要素である。教材の具体的な例を挙げ、どのような教材が、創造性・自由・多読の成功の要素である楽しさを壊すことなく、学生の評価をすることができることを示す。

FEW ENGLISH language teachers would disagree that Extensive Reading (ER) is an effective way of improving learners' L2 proficiency. But there is less agreement on the best way(s) of implementing it in the classroom. Current orthodoxy insists on a simple plan: have students read. In the words of Day and Bamford (1998), "Ideally, ...no post-reading work should be required, the act of reading being its own reward. Students read and that is all" (p. 140). Mason (2005) goes further, claiming that output activities result in insufficient reading and that "an excessive amount of speaking and writing actually detracts from students' ability to speak and write" (¶ 5). This is driven by the belief that input is what counts in language acquisition: output activities merely get in the way.

This presents ELT instructors with a dilemma. How do you formulate grades for ER without having students perform assessment tasks? On the one hand, experts tell us that output activities are bad. On the other hand, our administrative overseers tell us to evaluate students' work and reduce it to an A, B, or C. It is the teacher's lot to

take on the (often idealistic) wisdom of researchers, synthesize it with the (often draconian) demands of administrators, and come up with a plan that does justice to those that matter most: the learners. This paper is an attempt to map out a middle path for ER instructors.

To begin with, I argue that ER teachers need to be freed of the notion that all output activities in class are bad. EFL students, for example, have precious few opportunities to speak the target language, given it is predominantly not used in the society around them. Many EFL programs therefore adopt a comprehensive skills approach: one where speaking/writing pervades all language classes regardless of lesson foci. Secondly, reading ceases to be a solitary activity when it is used as the basis for pair/group activities. Reading for the classroom community - having the chance to share ideas and feelings - adds purpose and motivation. Thirdly, output activities give students opportunities to recommend books to each other. Students know best what students like, and face-to-face book discussions are the best forum for exchanging information about subject matter, level of difficulty, and generational relevance.

If we accept the above, the next question is one of materials design: what kinds of output activities might be suitable for ER in the classroom? This is where the twin themes of accountability and variety become central. We need activities that make students accountable for what they

have read, ones that allow the instructor to make judgments about the students' reading efforts. On the other hand, we do not want to impinge on students' motivation and enjoyment, as these processes are essential to successful ER. To ensure that students remain stimulated, we must design materials that are not repetitive and encourage both critical thought and creative response. It is important that students do not, for example, simply fill in a standard book report every week, since such a task would eventually be perceived as a chore or mere assessment exercise.

The final section of this paper therefore showcases a series of ten activities that meet the two criteria of accountability and variety. These activities require students to reflect in written

form in the first instance, but can also be used as a springboard for book discussions. It is argued that an ER course can benefit greatly from a large bank of creative tasks, working on the hypothesis that non-repetitiveness dovetails with high student interest.

References

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- Mason, B. (2005). Extensive reading; Why do it, how to do it, how not to do it. *ELT News*. Retrieved October 10, 2007, from <www.eltnews.com/features/special/031.shtml>.



Does vocabulary-training software support neuro-compatible vocabulary acquisition?

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本稿では、語彙トレーニングに関して、心的辞書・忘却・間をおいた繰り返し・キーワード記憶術の言語学や心理学における研究成果について再考する。また、数多くある語彙トレーニング・プログラム用ソフトウェアの中から5つを取り上げ紹介する。これらの5つのプログラムは全てコンピュータを用いたフラッシュカード・システムを取り入れている。jMemorizeはPCとマッキントッシュで用いることができる。ProVocはマルチメディアの面で優れているが、作動が可能なのはマッキントッシュのみである。これらの2つのソフトウェアとTeachMaster (PCのみで作動可能)は全てフリーウェアである。受賞ソフトウェアvTrainは教育機関においては無料で用いることができ、Mylörnはフラッシュカード500枚までは無料で使用できる。これらの全てのプログラムは、間をおいた繰り返しを実施することで忘却の回避を試みている。MylörnとTeachMasterは、連語・同等・上位・同義といった心的辞書における関連性を考慮した項目を提供している。脳研究の成果を取り入れた研究が増えつつあるが、これらのプログラムの効果は未だに十分に証明されていない。

FOR THOSE new to vocabulary-training software, this report is an accessible introduction to its basic principles, advantages, and shortcomings. For teachers already familiar with such software, additional justification, inspiration, and viewpoints on its use are presented from linguistic and psychological perspectives. This paper reconsiders the following four points in conjunction with vocabulary training programs:

- *Mental lexicon*: Aitchison's *Words in the Mind* (2003) is the major source for citations, naming,

and giving examples for the different links that exist among vocabulary entities.

- *Forgetting*: A serial learning experiment can be carried out, similar to the one Ebbinghaus did in his classic treatise on memory back in 1885.
- *Spacing effect*: Dempster (1988) is quoted in connection with this phenomenon, where the retention (and learning) is better if there are larger time intervals between repetitions.
- *Keyword method*: For mnemonics, the keyword method demonstrates how a mental detour (two successive mental links connecting L1 and L2 target words through a keyword) can help to remember an L2 target word when a single mental route (a direct mental link between L1 and L2 word pair) is not yet available.

From the numerous vocabulary-training programs currently available on both the Macintosh and Windows platforms, five are introduced in this paper. All programs utilize flashcard methodologies, mostly based on the *Leitner* system. *jMemorize* runs on both PCs and Macs. *ProVoc* has good multimedia features but runs only on the Mac. These two and PC-only *TeachMaster* are