Hawai'i Teachers of English to speakers of other languages

The Word - Volume 23 Issue 1

How Many Words do Our Students Need to Know to Read and Comprehend Adequately?

By Jay Tanaka

Inside this issue:

Hawai'i TESOL, the local affiliate of TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc.), is a nonprofit organization dedicated to building a community of professionals teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) in the state of Hawai'i.

Lexical coverage refers to the percentage of words known by the reader in a given text. For example, if we count every single word in a text and discover that we know exactly half of them, we would have *50% coverage*. It is common sense that the more words you know in a reading, the better you will understand it. However, what percentage of words in a text should be known to gain adequate comprehension? (Definitely more than 50%!) There is an ongoing debate about the amount of vocabulary students need in order to comprehend a reading (Carver, 1994; Hirsh & Nation, 1992; Hu & Nation, 2000; Laufer, 1989; Laufer & Ravenhorst-Kalovski, 2010; Laufer & Sim, 1985; Nation, 2006; Schmitt, Jiang, & Grabe, 2011). In addition, it is important to note that reading comprehension is not only about vocabulary knowledge. Students also need knowledge on the content, reading skills, and knowledge of grammar. Nonetheless, the percentage of known vocabulary in a text, as a single variable, has proven to be an effective predictor of reading comprehension.

A milestone in vocabulary research

Hu and Nation's (2000) study of coverage featured four versions of a text that included nonsense words. These nonsense words were used to fix lexical coverage artificially at 80%, 90%, 95%, and 100%. In this way, the amount of unknown words in the text for any reader could be controlled. Four groups of learners were tested with texts at the four coverage levels, and a clear positive linear relationship between coverage and reading comprehension was discovered. Hu and Nation (2000) determined that at 98% coverage nearly all learners should have adequate comprehension of the reading.

In order to determine the implications of this finding, what constitutes 'adequate comprehension' must be clarified. If adequate comprehension is thought of as 'the ability to read and understand a text independently without dictionary use,' then perhaps 98% is an appropriate coverage level. However, adequate comprehension could also be defined as 'capable of understanding with some assistance from a teacher or a dictionary.' In this case, an appropriate coverage level might be closer to 95% (Laufer & Ravenhorst-Kalovski, 2010). Clearly, the type of reading being taught in the classroom matters a great deal in determining how many words our students need to know. For example, coverage for a text used in extensive reading, which is unassisted reading at a fluent speed (Day & Bamford, 1998), should be 98%. This would not be the case for an intensive reading activity designed to teach, say, the structure of an essay.

How Many Words . . . (continued)

(Continued from page 1.)

What should we do in the classroom

Providing our students with reading material that matches their proficiency level is crucial. To do this, we need to accomplish two things: 1) Measure the vocabulary level of our students; and 2) Examine the vocabulary of the texts being used.

1. Measure the vocabulary level of our students

To measure students' vocabulary, download the [Vocabulary Resource Booklet] from Paul Nation's website: (http://www.victoria.ac.nz/lals/about/staff/paul-nation). The bilingual vocabulary levels tests (VLTs) are useful for measuring the vocabulary of beginner to intermediate ESL students. A list of the 2,000 most frequently occurring words in English are used to test how many of the words students know. Have students take the 1000-level and 2000-level VLTs and convert their scores to percentages (15/30 = 50%, 18/30 = 60%, etc.). Then, multiply 1,000 by the percentage to get the number of words the students know at each of the two levels. For more advanced students, try the Vocabulary Size Test (VST), which is also available to download from Paul Nation's website.

2. Examine the vocabulary of the texts being used

On the back cover of most books written for ESL students is a chart listing the level of the book and the number of headwords. Thankfully, most publishers organize the book's level of difficulty according to which words occur most frequently in English (The same as the VLT). Thus, we can match a student's vocabulary size with the number of headwords in the book. Obviously, it is never a perfect match, but it is a good starting point. The next step is to have the student read a page or two from the book. If the student finds that every sentence has an unknown word, the book may be too difficult. Keep the 98% coverage concept in mind. For the student to comprehend and enjoy reading the book, the great majority of the words in the book must already be known.

Another, more precise way of analyzing the vocabulary of a text is through an online tool called vocabprofile (http://www.lextutor.ca/vp/eng/). While the tool is simple to use, the interpretation of the analysis can be tricky. However, one important thing that it reveals is the amount of academic English that is in the text. Academic words are highlighted in yellow and a percentage is given. Depending on the type of class, a teacher may or may not want to use a text with a high percentage of academic words.

Conclusion

Making sure our students know enough words to comprehend a reading is crucial. We can start by being aware of the vocabulary size of our students and the vocabulary make-up of the texts we are using in class. In addition to this, we should consider the importance of the linear relationship between coverage and comprehension (Schmitt *et al.,* 2011). Learning more vocabulary is central to being able to read more difficult (and interesting) texts. I would argue that vocabulary knowledge is *the* core component in language proficiency, and so it follows that vocabulary learning should be a core element, if not the centerpiece, of any ESL curriculum.

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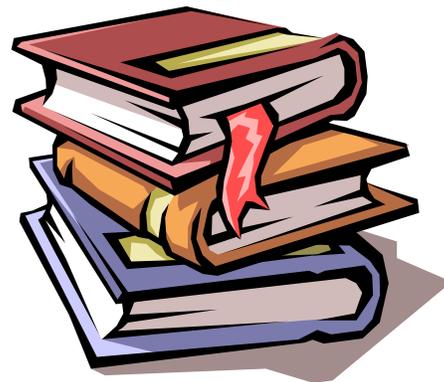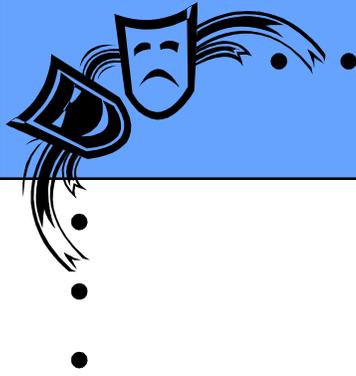
Creating New Spaces for Learning with Theater

By Gordon West

Theater activities are nothing new in the ESL classroom. They might range from reader's theater, to having students create and perform full scenes or plays. I have had some of my best teaching experiences using these theater games with students of all ages from elementary to university, and across proficiency levels. My experience of theater is a bit different from most ESL teachers' however. Hopefully, this article will provide you with both new reasons for and ways of using theater in your own classrooms.

As ESL/EFL teachers, we work in a very special space where many different cultures and backgrounds are able to come together. Students in this context have a lot going on as they are attempting to find their way in this new place. In addition to language, the content of our classes can provide a safe space for them to work through issues or problems they might be having. Through this understanding of our position as teachers, I draw on theater games (learned while working in theater) developed by Jacques Lecoq (Lecoq, Carosso, & Lallias, 2002) and Augusto Boal (1992) as ways of creating safe spaces and as catalysts for problem-posing and problem-solving.

Lecoqian Theater, inspired by miming and clowning traditions, is physical and playful. Boalian Theater is also playful, but participatory and open. It can be more like improvisation and seeks to involve everyone. In doing this Boal refers to people watching not as spectators, but as "spect-actors." Boalian theater has been used as a therapeutic, cathartic process for refugees, and others in difficult or oppressive situations. While our students may not be in those dire situations, it can still help them develop agency in their everyday lives.

Creating Space

Our classrooms are physical, built environments. The space is imposed when we walk in. We can manipulate this space by rearranging desks or changing our position in the room (i.e., sitting at a desk rather than standing at the front). Since this space is physical though, a fresh way for students to be able to take ownership of the space and to feel comfortable in it is to play with the space,

and recreate it as their own in the process. Actors never begin rehearsal without a warm up, and so during theater classes, we begin with some physical games to re-imagine and open the classroom space.

We start by moving all of the desks to the periphery of the room and make space for moving games (see table 1). Each game is intended to relate to the day's topic as much as possible. For example, we do Columbian hypnosis on the day that we talk about relationships between characters to help them think about how people interact in pairs or threes. When students are leading two people for example, I tell them to imagine being a spoiled child commanding their parents. The games are meant to be serious but also silly and get students moving and thinking about nonverbal communication.

Next we have a vocal warm-up (see table 1). These can be tongue twisters or short phrases that emphasize difficult pronunciation. It gets them to be vocal as a chorus, which acts to scaffold participation for shyer students who may practice being vocal as part of a group rather than individually right away. My experience has been that these movement and vocal warm-ups together create a relaxed atmosphere in which students feel freer to creatively produce language.

Playing Theater Games

The theater games that we play build on each other to culminate in a fully student produced piece. First, we begin with reader's theater. Reader's theater allows students to perform, but with the security of having the script on hand to read from. We have several readings as rehearsals. After one or two readings, I ask the other group(s) observing to be "directors" for an image theater (Boal, 1992). Before the actors start the scene, I ask the other teams to come and pose the actors for the scene. Since the actors do not typically move during reader's theater, they stay in the position they are posed in by the "directors" as they read. For example, if it is a scene of a family at dinner, the directors might arrange the actors around a table. After reading through the script in the positions given, the actors are free to change into the positions they think are more appropriate.

An example of this is a dinner scene. The directors might arrange the actors around a table. If the scene has a naughty child, the actor playing the naughty child might think it is better to sit under the table instead of properly at the table. The different positions naturally tend to lead to different inflections and ways of the characters talking to

Creating New Spaces . . . (continued)

each other. The groups must think carefully about how different arrangements in the space might change language.

Next we improvise scenes in a type of forum theater (Boal, 1992). The scene that I often give my students first is two strict parents and a child who wants something. They spend a few minutes brainstorming what they want (i.e., permission to do something, money, etc.). Then three students jump into the roles while the others watch. Often, I jump in as the child first, telling the parents to say "no" to everything I ask for. Initially, once the scene seems like it can't continue, I rotate new "spect-actors" in. After everyone has rotated through, they create their own scenes to improv. These become the basis for scenes that they write collaboratively and then perform as the final project for the class.

The themes that they come up with are very relevant to their own lives, centering on a conflict they are encountering, or had previously encountered. When students make scenes, many of the scenes are about love and relationships, some are about school, and others are about problems and misunderstandings that happen between languages. Many of them work through how to deal with injustice (in love or life) and issues of power. Working through these issues in multiple ways, and finding new ways of solving problems in the safe space of the classroom can helps students understand how they might deal with these problems outside of the classroom, and use English to do so.

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Table 1: Warm-ups and games

Movement warm-ups	Description
Columbian Hypnosis	One person holds out their hand, palm front, 5 inches from their partners face. The partner must follow the hand with their head. If the hand turns, the partner's head turns. If it moves, the partner follows. Alternatives might include having both partners simultaneously leading and following each other's hands, or one person leading two people.
Zap	Standing in a circle, one student makes a sound and movement (i.e., jump and yell "Zap!"). They make eye contact with another student in the circle who then imitates their sound and movement and then creates their own to pass to another student via eye contact.
Vocal warm-ups	
Unique New York	Repeat this over and over, louder and quieter, slower and faster.
The Big Black Bug	Same as Unique New York, but the full phrase is: The big black bug bit the big black bear and the big black bear bled blood.
Theater games	
Mage Theater (adapted from Boal, 1992)	One team of "actors" is posed by another team of "directors" before reading a scene in reader's theater. Upon repeating the scene, the "actors" can change their positions to a more "ideal image" for the scene.
Forum Theater (adapted from Boal, 1992)	A scene is started with roles given and a problem. The actors are given instructions not to solve the problem immediately. When it seems the problem will be resolved, a new actor or actors are rotated in to try new solutions or reject solutions in new ways, so that the scene is constantly evolving.

Integrating Place-based Learning in a Content-based Course for Short-term English Language Learners in Hawai'i

By: Yukiko Oki and Jay Pacpaco

Hawai'i has always attracted visitors from around the world with its beautiful weather, gorgeous beaches, and promises of a good tan. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that English language learners (ELLs) find their way to Hawai'i every year. Many ELLs stay a few weeks, a month, or stay a few more months to learn and use English on a daily basis and for the satisfaction of being able to tell others, "I've been to Hawai'i." Is there a better place to learn English than in Hawai'i? Maybe. However, there is no other place where a student is able to take a grammar course in the morning and then walk a few blocks to take a surf lesson at Waikiki beach in the afternoon. Most language learners that travel to another country to learn are not there just to learn the language but to also be immersed in the history, culture, and the community of that place. With Hawai'i as our backdrop, the ideas for courses, lessons, and activities are endless. With so many possibilities to engage short term language learners in Hawai'i, it may be difficult for instructors to decide on and plan for a short term course. An ideal curriculum would be to incorporate not only the language but the history, culture, and community of Hawai'i. As a result, a content-based course integrated with place-based learning principles will be presented to demonstrate the relationship between language learning and learning in a place like Hawai'i.

In a content-based course, language is introduced not solely but with another subject such as history or math or computer science (Graves, 2000). Using the L2 as the medium for instruction, a content-based syllabus encompasses both language and subject. In the case of Hawai'i, a content-based course could be designed to introduce students to Hawai'i's history and culture, Hawai'i's food culture, sustainability, marine science, tourism, and so much more. Depending on students' proficiencies in the language, there

may be greater emphasis on the language or greater emphasis on the content (Graves, 2000). Adapting a content-based curriculum to teach language learners allows for more engagement in the language learning because the language becomes more contextualized, and students are able to make better connections to the language and to the subject matter.

A content-based coursed coupled with principles of place-based learning may provide students with an even greater connection to language learned and the place that language is learned in. In general, place-based education is a fairly recent approach to educational curriculum and an even rarer connection is made between place-based learning and second language learning. The idea of place-based learning is rooted in the community of one's place; where one lives and learns. The place serves as the focus of place-based education and the things that are taught are guided by environmental, social, and community related factors of that particular place (Bartholomaeus, 2006). Some of the major principles found in place-based learning that may be paired in a content-based course for ELLs include: taking the classroom into the community; students working alongside local citizens; organizations and businesses in community service projects; learning is relevant to the learner; learning is focused on local themes; and developing an appreciation for one's place. Although many ELLs that come to Hawai'i are here for only a short period of time, in that short amount of time, a well-developed curriculum integrating place-based learning principles allows learners to become involved in the uniqueness of the Hawai'i's local culture, history, and identity. The following syllabus was created for a content-based course integrating some of the principles of place-based learning.

Hawai'i TESOL Travel Grants

The Travel Grants are intended to help members of HITESOL attend conferences on neighboring islands and conventions on the mainland. Hawai'i TESOL members who are currently practicing ESL teachers or administrators, or students earning a degree in an ESL-related field are eligible to apply for the grant. Preference however, is given to those applicants who have been accepted to present at a conference/convention and/or who have never attended a TESOL conference/convention before.

Five grants of $150 to attend the 2014 Hawai'i TESOL Conference on Oahu and one $500 grant to attend the International TESOL Convention in Portland, Oregon will be awarded. If you are interested, please go to the HITESOL website to see the application requirements and deadlines.

Please note that recipients are required to write a short article for *The Word* and are invited to share what they have learned at the conference/convention at a later Hawai'i TESOL event for the benefit of other HITESOL members. Unfortunately, recipients of a Hawai'i TESOL Travel Grant is not eligible for the same grant within a two year period.

Who will be awarded the Travel Gants this year. It might be you. To apply, go to http://hawaiitesol.wildapricot.org/.

Integrating Place-based Learning . . . (continued)

Hawaiian Food Culture	
Week 1	Introduction "Food and Preparation": *Ancient Hawaiian Civilization* (Charles E. Tuttle Company)
Week 2	"Food and Preparation" further discussion "Agriculture": *Ancient Hawaiian Civilization* (1989, Charles E. Tuttle Company)
Week 3	"Agriculture" further discussion "Aku and Ahi Fishing": *Ancient Hawaiian Civilization* (1989, Charles E. Tuttle Company) Field trip: local food walking tour, Mahiku Farmers Market
Week 4	"The People of Hawaii": *Discover Hawaii* (1987, National Textbook Company) "Fingers, Forks and Chopsticks": *Discover Hawaii* (1987, National Textbook Company) Field Trip reflections, prepare questions for the guest speaker
Week 5	Food descriptions introduction (taste, texture, color, shape, ingredients, preparation, etc) Guest speaker and food tasting of some homemade local Hawaiian dishes Field Trip: Seafood and Fishing Festival (Pier 38)
Week 6	Field Trip and guest speaker reflections and feedback Food descriptions application
Week 7	Community Service: Loʻi Farm and food drive (with Hawaiʻi Food Bank) Final project preparation and practice
Week 8	Final Project Presentation: Class PowerPoint presentation showcasing their learning and experience "Show and Tell" Poster session in groups, describing a dish of their choice

This syllabus was designed for a content-based course that focuses on developing students' integrated skills in English for high-beginner students at a private language school in Honolulu, Hawaiʻi. The students are adult language learners from all over the world. The class meets twice a week for eighty minutes each class. The general goal of the course is to trace the history of Hawaiian food and its transformation to the present. Students' objectives in the course includes researching and exploring the Hawaiian lifestyle in ancient times, focusing on agriculture and diet, recognizing Hawaii as a melting pot of culture and the impact on food culture, making comparisons to modern diet and ancient diet, describing Hawaiian food and sharing through poster presentations and small group activities. One activity that can be introduced to engage students in learning about Hawaiʻi's local food is through a simple matching game. In the handout below, students are given pictures of local food along with the names of that food. Students are given another handout with the food descriptions. Working with a partner students try to match the descriptions with the picture. This can be a quick activity to start a lesson to see what students may already know about Hawaiʻi's local food culture or as a concluding activity after a lesson on the various cultural influences in Hawaiʻi's local food dishes. The images and descriptions should be cut prior to class and instructions may be written on the board or given to students verbally.

Another big part of the development of this course is the incorporation of place-based learning. Since place-based learning involves taking the learning outside of the classroom, the course was designed to include community service learning projects such as students volunteering at a food bank to understand the social and economic concerns of the local community and volunteering at a Loʻi (taro field) farm to understand the preservation of ancient Hawaiian agricultural and sustainability methods. Integrating place-based learning with a content-based curriculum engages the short term ELLs not only in language learning but in learning the local culture and community of Hawaiʻi. Through such a combination of content and place-based learning, students develop positive attitudes toward language learning and culture.

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Integrating Place-based Learning . . . (continued)

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Yukiko Oki earned her MA in TESOL from Hawai'i Pacific University (May, 2013). She was awarded "Best Presentation" at the recent HITESOL Conference (February, 2013). Her interests in TESOL lie in teacher behavior/role and student motivation. She is currently teaching ESL at EF (Education First) International Language Schools in Honolulu.

Jaysievel "Jay" Pacpaco earned her MA in TESOL from Hawai'i Pacific University (May, 2013). She also earned her BA in International Relations at Hawai'i Pacific University (December, 2009). She hopes to teach abroad to gain more experience in teaching English language learners. She is an ESL instructor at International Mid Pac College in Honolulu.

Plate lunch

Malasada

Shave ice

Musubi

Poi

Poke

Chicken long rice

Kalua pork

Laulau

Haupia

Bento

Lomi salmon

A) Plate with 2 scoops of rice, macaroni salad, and two to three meat entrees of your choice. Some meat choices include: chicken katsu, Korean BBQ, Kalua pig, beef stew.	B) Portuguese doughnut covered with sugar.
C) Finer than a snow cone and topped with flavors like cherry, grape, and strawberry. You can add on sweet condensed milk, mochi balls, and/or red beans.	D) Raw fish or seafood. Eaten at parties as pupu (appetizer). Usually seasoned with Hawaiian sea salt, chili flakes, soy sauce, seaweed, and green onions.
E) A thick paste made by pounding taro. Taste may be bland or sour.	F) Raw salmon cubes mixed with Hawaiian sea salt and marinated with onions and tomatoes.
G) Long rice noodles cooked with shredded chicken.	H) Sliced pudding made of sweetened coconut milk. Similar to Jell-o.
I) Spam and rice wrapped in seaweed paper (nori).	J) Pork cooked in an underground oven, shredded, and mixed with cabbage.
K) Steamed pork, fish, or chicken that is wrapped in taro leaves and a ti leaf.	L) Japanese style lunches filled with rice, fish or meat, and pickled vegetables.

Answers:
A) Plate Lunch   B) Malasada   C) Shave Ice   D) Poke   E) Poi
F) Lomi Lomi Salmon   G) Chicken Long Rice   H) Haupia   I) Musubi
J) Kalua Pork   K) Lau Lau   L) Bento

Hawaiʻi TESOL Calendar of Events 2013-2014

November : Fall Professional Development Workshop:
Online Education
Date: November 13, 2013 at 6:30 pm
Location: TBA

February: HITESOL Spring Conference 2014
Date: February 14-15, 2014
Location: TBA

March: TESOL International Convention & English Language Expo
Date: March 26-29, 2014
Location: Portland, Oregon (hosted by Oregon TESOL)

April: Business Meeting & Highlights from TESOL
International Convention
Date: TBA
Location: TBA

May: Language Experience
(Target Language TBA)
Date: TBA
Location: TBA

Message from the President

Aloha kakou,

I would first like to extend a warm aloha kakou to welcome all of our members and volunteers to a brand new year of professional development and friendship with Hawaiʻi TESOL. On September 30th, we commence the 2013-2014 period with the TESOL social to be held at Global Village. We look forward to having new and returning members join us for this opportunity of networking and professional development. For the past thirty-seven years of affiliation with TESOL International, Hawaiʻi TESOL has enriched the profession in the state by joining dedicated professionals from university, community, and language institutions.

For the upcoming 2013-2014 season, we launch this new year with an experienced executive board, comprised of 14 members who bring to the organization a spirited combination of knowledge and ideas. Continuing on from last year are Vanessa Balagtas (Membership Secretary), Shawn Ford (Socio-Political Action Chair), Perry Christensen (Webmaster), Jean Kirschenmann (Sister Affiliate Liaison), Mark Wolfersberger (Member at Large), and Lisa Kawai (Editor of *The Word* newsletter). We also welcome again our Big Island Liaisons, Carrie Mospens and Julie Mowrer. We are also very grateful to Jennifer Hickman, who has agreed to remain on the board and share her expertise as Past President and Conference Chair. In addition, we welcome new members to the team, Andrea Childs (Vice-President), Erika Swanson (Treasurer), Stephen Peridore (First Member at Large), and Peter Castillo (Social Media Chair and Program Committee Chair). To all the board members, I thank you for your commitment and hard work to the organization so that we may continue to successfully serve our local TESOL community.

For the upcoming year, we have a few principal objectives. First, we will continue the effort to serve the TESOL community with relevant and exciting events. Part of this is the goal to expand the Annual Conference into a 2-day event to be held on Friday, February 14th and 15th. The change is for the addition of an "Electronic Village," which will offer new ideas and trainings for language instruction via technology. The conference will be held on Oahu, and the venue will be announced soon. Our second major goal is to recruit more members locally, nationally, and internationally. A report from the membership secretary showed that the organization has approximately 200 members. In addition, we plan to expand our digital presence through the new website and social media. If members have yet to see the new website, please visit us at http://hawaiitesol.wildapricot.org/. Also, please 'like' us on Facebook at https://www.facebook.com/TESOLHawaii.

Therefore, you can anticipate another fantastic year of Hawaiʻi TESOL events. Check out the calendar and mark the dates to join the TESOL community with your active participation and offer your ideas, expertise, and energy.

Mahalo nui loa,
Aaron Faidley
President, Hawaiʻi TESOL