

Effective Ways for Teaching and Learning Vocabulary from the Foreign Student's Viewpoint: Results of a Questionnaire

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This paper reports the results of a questionnaire which was used to collect data presented at the symposium of the Japanese Language Teaching Association in honor of Professor Fumiko Koide, held on 1 July 2000.

From the results, we found the following three points about teaching vocabulary:

- 1) It is effective to use materials that students are interested in and from which they can get essential information or knowledge.
- 2) Teachers should show words in a context, or use students' acquired knowledge and connect the new words with it so that students can memorize them easily.
- 3) Repetition is effective.

Regarding kinds of vocabulary, we compared the answers to the question " what kinds of vocabulary did you want to study in Japanese classes?" with four Japanese textbooks for beginners. It was found that the kinds of words appearing in textbooks were not enough. In order to cover the dearth of vocabulary, teachers are expected to make supplementary materials. In addition, to enhance students' self-study, activities aimed at acquisition of learning strategies, such as inference strategy, are needed. For self-study of kanji, teachers should guide students in how to use a dictionary and teach the distinction between prefix, suffix, and headword.

We also investigated three types of vocabulary, *Katakana*-words, onomatopoeia and honorifics. First, students are confused about the difference between native pronunciation of foreign words and *Katakana*-spelling. They want teachers to show them basic rules for spelling foreign words in *Katakana*. Second, overall students think that onomatopoeia is difficult to infer the meaning from the form, and accordingly to acquire, however, some of them are eager to use, although others think that only recognition is enough. When teachers teach onomatopoeia, it is necessary to present

expressions in a context, with the words usually appearing with them. Third, regarding honorifics, the difficulty of distinguishing their usage depending on the situation and/or speaker-hearer relationship was pinpointed. When teachers teach honorific expressions, it is important to practice them in appropriate contexts, varying situations and speaker-hearer relationships, after helping students understand the cultural background and the concept of honorific use.

From students' answers regarding effective ways they learn vocabulary, it was shown that students use various kinds of materials such as television, video, newspapers, novels and magazines, and study unknown words by writing them down. Also, we can see here again from their answers their belief in the efficacy of repetition. They will watch one video or try to write and speak one word over and over again. In other words, regardless of the material, it is important that students be conscious of words they don't know and try to learn them and that they use much repetition in their acquisition.

We got a comment from one of the Japanese learners at the symposium that learning vocabulary through a variety of circumstances is effective. For example, he said that a good way for learning words is to watch television, read a newspaper and speak with others about the same contents.

Because this research didn't have enough subjects, the results shouldn't be generalized. However, we think that we may have been able to suggest a possible direction to take. For the future, we look forward to further research involving more subjects or studies aimed at basic and intermediate Japanese learners who quit studying before reaching the advanced level.

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