

## **Suggestions for observation and research**

The adaptation of an activity should be done with the goal of improving learning. It is thus important that teachers monitor the activities they use to see if the way they have designed the activity is likely to result in useful learning. Because it is not possible to measure learning by observing an activity, the observer needs to look for evidence that conditions that encourage learning occur. If signs are not found, or if it is apparent that learners are doing things that will not help learning, then the teacher may need to redesign the activity in light of those observations.

### **Are the learners using the target vocabulary?**

#### Observation procedure

Make a list of the target vocabulary and record or sit near a group doing the activity. Each time a target word is used, put a mark next to it on the list. Each time it is used in a context that is different from the one in which it appeared on the written input, quickly note the context as an example of generative use.

If the activity is divided into steps, note the repetitions and generative use at each step.

Note which learners used the word.

#### Research questions

What are the best places in the written input to have target vocabulary?

Does a procedure like (1) expert groups to prepare for the task, (2) family groups to do the task, (3) reporting back to the class, result in more repetition of target vocabulary?

Are words used differently (generatively) in different steps of the procedure?

Does the use of role play result in more generative use?

Does vocabulary learning occur from the written input alone without use in the task?

What features of the design (a procedure, background to use as justification etc.) result in more use of the words?

### **Are the learners negotiating aspects of word knowledge?**

#### Observation procedure

Tape record and note instances of negotiation. note who negotiates with who. Note the quality of the explanation given in the negotiation. Note what is negotiated.

#### Research questions

Can learners provide useful information to each other about words?

Do observers (non-participants) learn as well as those who actively negotiate?

To what extent does negotiation involve generative use?

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You have a friend who comes from a poor family. One day when you were in a supermarket you saw your friend *conceal* a packet of sweets under his *jacket*. He thinks you did not see him steal them. You know that the *manager* of the supermarket is very *strict* about shop-lifters and always calls the police and *prosecutes offenders*. You also believe that the shop has some kind of system for catching shop-lifters. What will you do?

- from - Aunt -*
- Inform the manager immediately and ask him not to *prosecute* your friend.
  - Tell your friend to return the sweets to the *shelves*.
  - Discuss it with your friend later to *discourage* him from doing it in the future.
  - Just *ignore* it.
  - Discuss it with your parents.
  - Ask your friend for half of the sweets.
  - Leave the shop immediately so that you are not *connected* with your friend's actions.
  - Forcibly* take the sweets from your friend and put them back on the shelves.

### Split information and expert groups

Split the choices between the members of the group taking two each. Form groups of the people with the same pairs of choices. In these expert groups discuss (1) what your choices mean, (2) the advantages, and (3) disadvantages of each choice.

Then split into groups of four with a person from each expert group in the new group.

### Roles or Jobs

Each person takes a role while doing the activity. The roles are

- 1 the friend's parents
- 2 a worker in the supermarket
- 3 the police
- 4 the person who stole the sweets
- 5 you.

OR

Each person takes a job while doing the activity.

- 1 Encourage others to speak by asking, "What do you think?", "Do you agree?", "Which one do you *favour*?"
- 2 Summarize what others have said beginning with phrases like, "So you think that ...", or "So we have decided that ...".
- 3 *Deliberately* disagree with some of the group members by saying things like, "No. That's not a good idea. I think ...", or "I'm opposed to that. I think we should ...".
- 4 Keep the group working towards the answer by saying things like, "Let's decide what we *definitely* won't do.", or "Let's decide on the best *solution*."

### Reporting back

After your group has decided on a course of action, prepare a list of reasons why you chose this one and why you did not choose the others. Report these reasons to the other groups.

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### VOCABULARY LEARNING THROUGH COMMUNICATIVE TASKS

#### 1 Sources of information

Vocabulary items can be learned from texts or other learners.

- 35% of the vocabulary in the pre-test was known by everyone.
- 54% was known by at least one person but not by all.
- 11% was not known by anyone.

#### 2 Conditions of learning

The way in which vocabulary is received and used affects learning.

In a communication task, learning can occur through

- 1 negotiation (75% chance of learning)
  - doing or observing (20% of total learning)
- 2 spoken use or meeting in text (57% chance of learning) - doing or observing
  - doing or observing (80% of total learning)

#### 3 Reasons for learning

The more generatively an item is used, the greater the strength and chance of learning.

- Noticing
- Receptive retrieval
- Productive retrieval
- Receptive generative use
- Productive generative use

#### 4 Planning learning

Teachers can strongly affect learning through careful planning.

All negotiated items were in the written input to the activity.

It is possible to predict what vocabulary will be used.

Item	Frequency	Number of learners who negotiated the item	Number of learners who used the item in the written input
1	1	1	1
2	1	1	1
3	1	1	1
4	1	1	1
5	1	1	1

#### 5 Amount of learning

On average in half an hour, each learner learned 4 words.

#### A sample task

The learners work in groups to solve the following written problem.

You have just seen one of your friends stealing things from a local shop. What will you do?

- 1 Inform the shop owner immediately.
- 2 Tell your friend to put it back.
- 3 Discuss it with your friend later to discourage him from doing it in the future.
- 4 Just ignore it.
- 5 Discuss it with your parents.

**Sample tasks to adapt**

Make five improvements to one of these tasks to increase vocabulary learning. Be ready to justify your improvements.

A The learners question each other.

Find someone who ...	Name
likes to stay in bed late	
likes warm beer	
has a cat	

B Some learners are buyers and some are sellers. The sellers work in pairs and have different written information about holidays overseas. For example, one pair has information about holidays in New Zealand. Another pair has information about holidays in Greece. The buyers are also in pairs and have some written questions that they should ask the sellers. These are questions like, "Is it safe there?", "Can we get Japanese food there?". The sellers take turns at trying to sell their holidays to the buyers. At the end the buyers must decide what holiday they want.

C Safety in the Open. Here are some things you could take with you on a day's walk in the New Zealand bush. Put a number beside each one to show how important it is for you. That is, put 1 beside the one you think is most important for your safety, 2 beside the next and so on.

- ( ) a lightweight nylon parka
- ( ) jandals
- ( ) woollen socks
- ( ) barley sugar
- ( ) a bottle of water
- ( ) a plastic bag big enough to crawl into
- ( ) a rope
- ( ) overtrousers
- ( ) a compass

**Maximising vocabulary learning from communicative tasks**

- 1 Make sure that the target vocabulary is in the written input to the task and occurs in the best place in the written input.
  - Have plenty of written input
  - Make sure about 12 target words occur in the written input
  - Try to predict what parts of the written input are most likely to be used in the task and put wanted vocabulary there
- 2 Design the task so that the written input needs to be used.
  - Avoid the use of numbering in lists of items or choices
  - Use retelling, role play, problem solving discussion based on the written input
  - Have a clear outcome to the task, such as ranking, choosing, problem solving, completion

3 Get each learner in the group actively involved.

- Split the information
- Assign jobs or roles
- Keep the group size reasonably small about four or five learners
- Have learners of roughly equal proficiency in a group who feel comfortable negotiating with each other

4 Ensure that the vocabulary is used in ways that encourage learning.

- Use tasks such as role play that require changing the context of the vocabulary
- Use a procedure such as the pyramid procedure or reporting back to get the vocabulary reused
- Remove the input so that recall is required, or after looking at the detailed sheet, use a reduced one for the task
- After the task is completed, get the learners to reflect on what vocabulary they learned

Make an observation checklist for monitoring the activity, and if possible, use it.