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Autonomous Learning of Vocabulary through Extensive Reading

par
James Coady
et
Contributions de LAIRDIL

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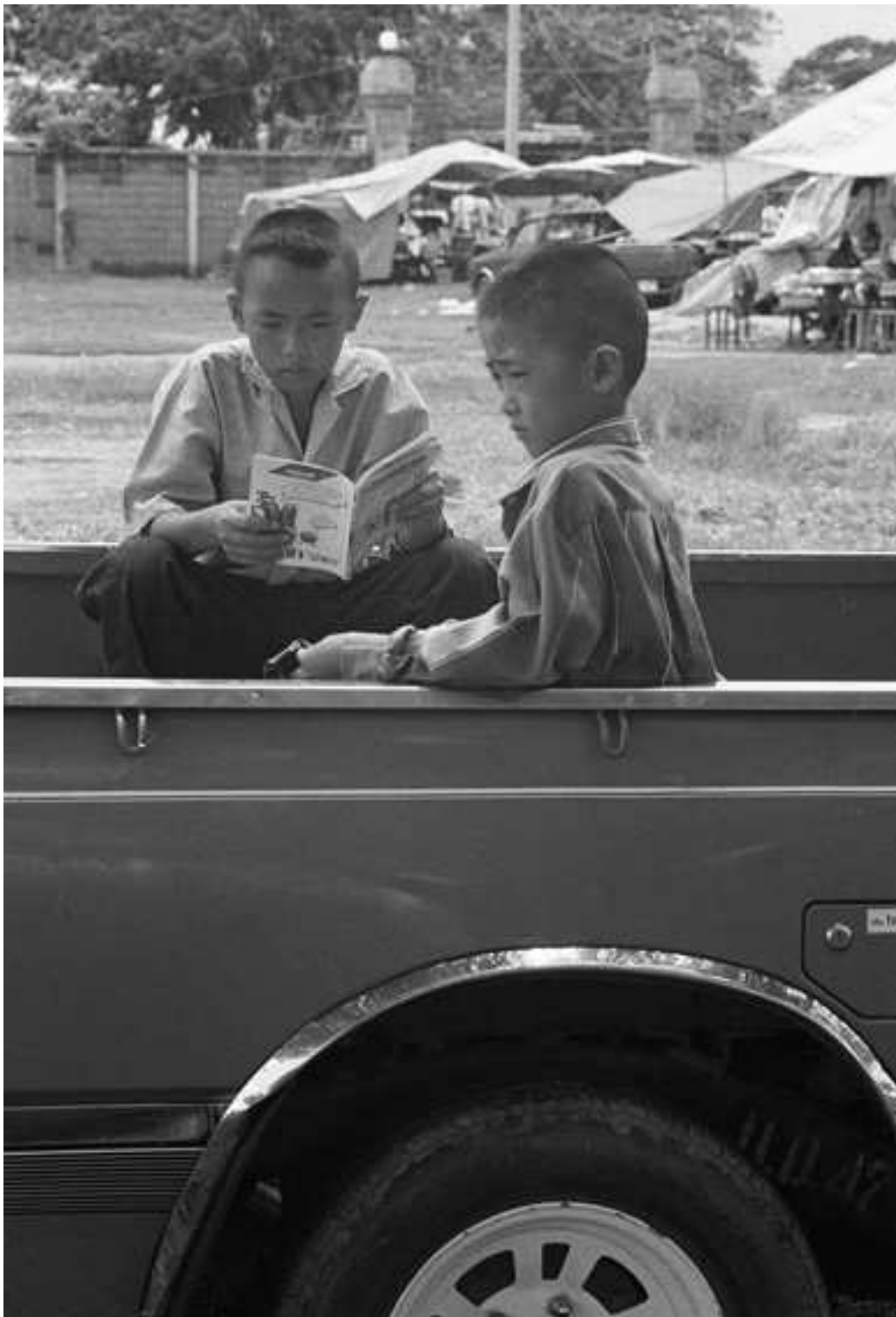
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La conférence n° 2, **Autonomous Learning of Vocabulary Through Extensive Reading,** a été donnée le 27 janvier 1994 par James Coady. Titulaire d'un doctorat en linguistique et professeur à l'Université d'Ohio à Athens, James Coady a, depuis vingt ans, axé sa recherche sur la lecture et l'acquisition du vocabulaire par la lecture chez les adultes apprenant une seconde langue.

Autres séminaires :

- *The Problems of Oral Testing. What Did you Say?*
- *Rereading Video*
- *Maximizing the Value of Jigsaw Activities*
- *Aspects of Fluency and Accuracy*
- *Ten Top Principles in the Design of Vocabulary Materials*

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Autonomous Learning of Vocabulary Through Extensive Reading

It's a real dilemma at times for us when we are teaching a language: how do our students learn vocabulary? How do they learn enough words through extensive reading when they do not know enough words to read well?

My thesis is that those who achieve a high proficiency in the target language will indeed acquire most of their vocabulary knowledge through extensive reading. Reading, in particular extensive reading, is the fundamental method for acquiring a large vocabulary in a foreign language.

The incidental vocabulary learning hypothesis

There is a very influential thesis in America today which is called the incidental vocabulary learning hypothesis (Nagy and Herman, 1985) and is based on how children learn vocabulary in their native language and in particular how much vocabulary they know when they arrive at school, when they start to read. And the findings from their research propose that the vast majority of vocabulary words for native speakers are learnt gradually through repeated exposures in various discourse contexts. Proponents of this view claim that learners typically need about ten to twelve exposures to a word over time in order to acquire it. They observe that native speakers can learn as many as fifteen words a day from the ages of two to seven. So, they will arrive at elementary school with a vocabulary of at least 5,000 words. This is one of the reasons they are ready to start reading, as the amount of vocabulary needed in order to become an independent reader in a language is approximately 5,000 words. This is also why we should not ask children to seriously read (which does not preclude pre-reading activities) before they have acquired these 5,000 words. University students know about 10 to 20,000 words. There are between 18 and 19,000 words total in Shakespeare who has the largest

vocabulary, to my knowledge, of writers in any language. He even created words. Most writers' vocabulary is contained within 10,000 words generally.

Vocabulary acquisition, even for native speakers, is quite an accomplishment. When children get to school, they have the 5,000 words that they have learnt orally and when they learn to read it is at first a process of recognition. Later, there is a great deal of vocabulary growth that takes place since one of the purposes of school is to teach a lot of ideas and most of these ideas have words attached to them. So there is a great deal of vocabulary that is added when one goes through school.

Laufer and Nation have worked on the topic of non-native learners quite a bit and argue that the minimum amount of vocabulary knowledge needed for reading comprehension, when it is a foreign language, is basically about 3,000 word families. We are moving more towards word families these days than words. A word family is essentially a word and all its inflected endings, the plural, the possessive, whatever, as well as transparent forms of the word. So *friend*, *friendly*, even *friendliness* and *befriend* would all be part of the great word family for the word *friend*. So a 3,000 word family knowledge translates to about 5,000 words for reading. At that point, good L1 readers can be expected to begin to transfer their reading strategies to L2.

For an independent or autonomous learner, who can read on his/her own and who has enough vocabulary knowledge to read in a fashion that looks like what a native speaker would do and is reasonably capable of attacking a new text, with enough background of the subject matter and a language level sufficient to enable him/her to comprehend that text, the amount of vocabulary needed is about 5,000 word families or 8,000 lexical items. It is staggering to think that students, after about 700 hours of instruction (100 hours a year for seven years at the rate of three hours a week) know about 2,000 words, highly frequent, basic ones. But there is a gap between the vocabulary knowledge of students who have finished secondary school and the type of materials they may be presented with, particularly in the scientific or technical field. They are not immediately ready to read those materials.

The beginner's paradox

This is the beginner's paradox: how does the student learn enough words to read with modest comprehension at the threshold level of 3,000 word families and beyond that the independence level of 5,000 words? Particularly when our students have all too often minimal opportunity to practise the language, to use it frequently and with great success. Nation and Coady (1991) claim that successful guessing in context occurs when about 98% of the lexical items in a text are already known.

From a comparison of the count of words in spoken English (Kucera, Francis, 1967)) and the count of words in written English (Schonell, Medleton, Shaw, 1956) it seems that there are at least twice as many words in written English as in spoken English. So you cannot learn all the words you need to read at university level based on spoken competence alone. Even native speakers of English would not be able to read scientific or technological material without some kind of help. There are a great many words that are found in the written domains that are not found in speech. But, since many of these words have Latin and Greek roots, for a French audience, the prospect is not so bleak. A number of low-frequency words in English are only found in writing, so the only way to really encounter them is to read. The way to achieve a full vocabulary proficiency is best accomplished through extensive reading.

The beginners' paradox is that they need to read to learn but they do not know enough words to read well. So, how can they read to learn words they do not know?

The vicious circle of the weak reader vs. the virtuous circle of the good reader

Christine Nuttall (1982) identifies this as the vicious circle of the weak reader and the virtuous circle of the good reader. According to her, the weak reader does not understand, reads very slowly, does not enjoy reading, does not read much and continues in that vicious cycle. On the other hand she argues that the good reader has a very

Fig. 1
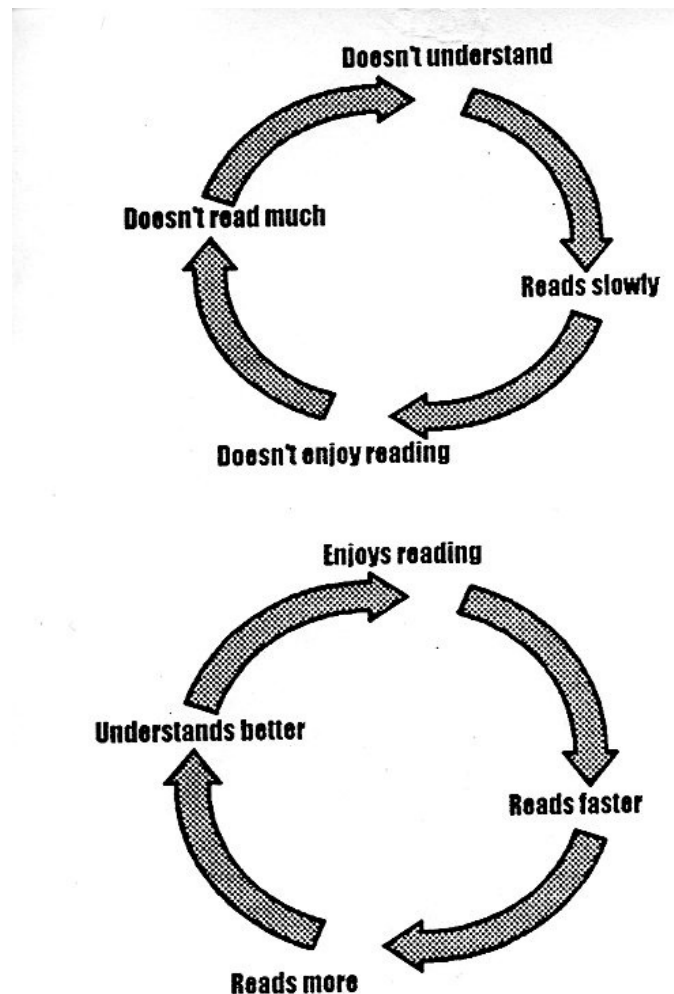
different profile: s/he enjoys reading, reads faster, reads more, understands better, reads more again, reads faster, reads better. Nuttall claims that it does not matter where you enter the circle, because any of the factors that make it up will help produce any of the others (p. 167). How do we get from vice to virtue? The teacher must break the cycle, force the student to leave this cycle. It can be done at the level of comprehension, or of reading speed, or the quantity of reading, or the enjoyment of reading, or best, on all levels, enjoyment and quantity of reading being an excellent beginning.

The vocabulary control movement

One way to solve the beginner's paradox has been the vocabulary control movement, which attempts to drastically limit the vocabulary

found in learner texts. The British, with their simplified readers, have been doing this for years, eliminating all words above a certain level of difficulty as determined by a list of the frequency with which words occur in the language in general (*e.g.* West, 1953). But it did not solve the problem, it did not work. The first criticism is that the texts are not seen as authentic. They are rewritten in a different syntax, with a different collocation of words and that left a real gap. Critics of such texts (Widdowson, 1979; Huckin, 1983) claim that they do not prepare students for the real texts which they will have to face. Reading Shakespeare in a simplified version is not reading Shakespeare. There is more to reading than words. The second criticism is that if students cannot read the words they need, they cannot learn them. These texts can be used at times but fail to solve the problem.

Note that beginning native speakers are not expected to read difficult material, difficult literature, for example. Often, what native speakers are exposed to, are materials that are written at their level, *i.e.* they are authentic, well-written materials for these students. There is a growing field of children's literature, the Newberry books for example, a large number of works that are interesting and well-written. Children like them and understand them and they are written at their level, which means they are literature, but appropriate for children. This is something that we can ask our students to read. Good literature has interesting ideas, universal themes. Our students can both understand and enjoy it. They can also see how Americans treat a problem. By making the books available to students, they can choose for themselves what to read.

Kathy Wallace (1992) writes: "If we see authenticity (of text) as lying in the interaction between text and reader, and not in the text itself, we need not hesitate to use specially written texts." These were not specially written for foreign students, they were written for a younger audience of native speakers but if the interaction that takes place between the text and the reader is real and meaningful, if they enjoy it, which I am arguing they will, they will be willing to back up, to be more childlike because they understand that reading is developmental, that it may be necessary to go back to an earlier stage of life to go where they want to go. It is not an insult to their personhood.

(Remark from the audience. French students read so many cartoon albums that they are used to childlike material.)

The speed of reading

The parameter of speed of reading is rarely emphasised. Yet, the speed at which one reads is one of the crucial variables in reading proficiency. Ron Carver has done a great deal of research on the speed of reading of native speakers of English. He describes five basic reading processes. That concept comes from ***Reading and Auditory Hearing.*** He argues that there is a strong relationship between the speed at which you read and the speed at which you listen to ordinary speech. He develops the idea that norms or rates of speed can be defined for readers and that the middle one, his "rauding", to use his word, might be called a normative or normal rate of reading. That is where a good reader, a fluent reader in any language, reads. If s/he slows down to 200 words a minute, it is for purposes of learning or, to 138 wpm for memorising.

Fig. 2

Five basic reading processes	Goals of model processes	Culminating components of the model processes	Typical college rates for model processes
Scanning	Find target words	Lexical access	600 words per minute
Skimming	Find transposed words	Semantic encoding	450 wpm
Rauding	Comprehend complete thoughts in sentences	Sentential integration	300 wpm
Learning	Pass multiple choice test	Idea remembering	200 wpm
Memorising	Recall, orally or in writing	Fact rehearsal	138 wpm

Why do our students think all too often that the best way to read something is to read it in the slowest way possible, word by word? In our native language we are not stuck if we do not understand a work. So we have another gap, another discrepancy between the strategies, the processes, goals, components, rates that are used in reading your native language and those that are used to read the target language. But there should not be a difference. Proficient reading in French is like proficient reading in English. And if there is a rate or a speed you must achieve it is that middle 300. It is the norm, the average. If you read too slowly, word by word, you cannot remember what was in the sentence before. But you can vary your speed according to your purpose. If you are skimming, you can read very fast. If you are trying to memorise, you read slowly. The problems our students are having is they all slow down to this level. They do not read efficiently, therefore they do not understand, they get bored, they stop reading. It is self-defeating. So we must not forget that speed of reading is one of the parameters in the skill of reading. And we must spend time, pedagogically, encouraging our students to read faster.

The frequency of vocabulary

There is another reason for getting students to read faster, besides a vague notion of efficiency. And for that we have to talk about vocabulary and frequency of vocabulary. A study was done in 1971 (Carroll, Davis, Richman) based on texts found in schools in America, mostly school textbooks, therefore words a native speaker would have encountered by the end of secondary school. In theory, a student would have been exposed (if s/he had been in contact with all those texts, which is never the case) to 86,741 different words out of a running corpus (*i.e.* the total number of words) of five million words. This type of study has been done again and again, especially by the British who have come up with the same results. What is interesting is that the ten most frequent words of English take up about 24% of the total. The next 150 most frequent words are extremely easy, familiar words.

Fig. 3 : Figures based on a count of 5,000,000 running words (Carroll, Davis, Richman, 1971)

Different words	% of running words
86,741	100
43,831	99
5,000	89.4
3,000	85.2
2,000	81.3
100	49
10	23.7

When we get up to 90% we find the magic word again, 5,000 words.. And this is very important. On a given page of a given text, we find that 90% of the words on that page are in those very frequent words. In other words, the same words occur again and again and they make up the vast majority of the words on a given page. So the gap can be bridged. It is not insurmountable. There is room for optimism. But the bad news is that there are a lot of words, about 80,000, that are rare, that do not occur very often, once every million words or once every half million words. You meet those words, every so often, in written texts, occasionally in speech, but rarely. Speech uses even fewer words to say the same thing. So the only way to learn these words is through extensive reading.

Your brain has only so much time to process the words on a page as you are reading along, to grab those words off the page and make sense of them. It is a fact of human cognition that if you have the 5,000 words to the point of automaticity, they are known so well that they are part of what is known as "sight vocabulary", they are recognised immediately. When that happens, when you are that good at reading any language, those 99% of the words on the page come to you almost immediately; therefore you have more time left to work on the new words. So there is a relationship between knowledge of the 5,000 words and all those that we do not know so well. We need time to work on them because when we meet them, they are relatively new,

relatively difficult, but if we have got the others under control, we have time to work on the new words: to guess at them, to skip them, etc. Where we run into trouble is that our students do not know the 5,000 words well. They are spending precious thinking time recognising the common ones, taking away from time needed for the rarer ones and they start to panic a little, then they slow down, thinking that will improve things, and you know where they go from there.

Improving reading speed

So the secret actually is to speed up. The secret is teach them, force them, encourage them, motivate them to read the frequent words rapidly and well so that they achieve automaticity. It is one of the secrets to good reading. How do we do that? There are rapid reading exercises (*see Appendix 2:* "Improving reading rate"). One of the reasons I like these is because they are very short, they can be done in the classroom, taking five, ten minutes. I do not think I can come up to you and say "You must devote one hour a week to reading". I know that it is impossible, your curriculum could not stand that kind of demand. But perhaps you can get your students to read outside class time.

Let us take the first exercise.

Students are given sixty seconds to read as much material as they can. You can do this with one of your class texts. Just pick out a text that you know is good, something that you use for another purpose, writing or whatever. Obviously it is best if they are looking at new material. Have them read as fast as they can for sixty seconds. Time them and when the minute is up, say, "Stop. Read again". And they are supposed to go back to the beginning of the text and read it again and they are encouraged to read more this time, not only to read the same material again but to try and read a little more. And then during a third and fourth cycle you try and get them to do that again. And what will happen after they have practised a few times is they will find they can actually read more, by actually forcing themselves, they can get further into the text within the same sixty seconds.

Why do that? It is far better, within a half hour period, to read the same text three times quickly than one time slowly. The research suggests that you learn more, you remember more of a text if you read it the three times quickly rather than the one time slowly. Because what happens is that the first time through you get some of it, the next time through you get more of it, the third time through you get more of it. Some of our students have terrible reading strategies. Some of them think that the way to read is to start with the first word and keep going until you die, or run out of time. This classroom technique is a nice way to get them to realise that they can read faster and understand. You have added something to their knowledge, you have improved their skills, you have tried to break the cycle.

With these exercises, which can be done quickly, you are teaching meta-cognitive skills, you are telling the students, "This is something you should be doing", and hopefully the good learners will begin to incorporate some of that in their own activities.

Also, they have skills in L1 that they do not transfer to L2. Remind them of what they do in their own language if they are good readers.

Comprehension varies

The same person reading the same text at different times has a different comprehension result. Therefore, comprehension is not unique or the same for everyone or every time. Comprehension varies. What about the traditional ten comprehension questions after a text? Are they the only *ten* comprehension questions for that text? Have you ever disagreed with them? Have you ever found one you could not answer? We all have. That is because those ten comprehension questions that such teachers or writers decide are good for them, according to their knowledge, their background and all the rest, but may not serve as well for you. I tell my students that I do not expect them to get all ten questions right every time. Comprehension and reading is not perfect or unique or replicable 100% in every case. They need to get about 70 or 80% right on the average every time they do one of those exercises to show they were successful

comprehenders. In the real world we do not get 100%. We concentrate on what we need and ignore the rest. We comprehend according to our purpose, our background, our particular style of cognition, etc. Saying that these ten comprehension questions are the only right ones is not fair, not realistic, nor really representative of true reading. Some of the questions asked are the dumbest ones. Who cares what colour the hat of the hero was, except in a detective story where it might be important for the investigation? Students, especially scientific students, expect to understand every single word. They think language is like mathematics But even they allow for rounding in their answers. Language is a representation of the world. The world is more messy than mathematics.

Realistic comprehension exercises

It is better to replace the comprehension questions by a re-telling exercise that is more realistic. In real life, people do talk about what they have read and may agree or disagree with their interpretation of the text. In the classroom, we have to ask ourselves if the activities take us closer to real language activities. Reading aloud, for example, is unrealistic. When do adults in the normal world read aloud? I read aloud sometimes to my students, as a model, and because I am a good reader out loud. When we consider such activities, we should ask, do they bring them closer to the proficient activity of an adult? If they do not, we have to be suspicious of it.

Crutches for reading

Now, there are times when we have to have crutches, when we have to bridge gaps and we do things that are not perfectly normal. Even the communicative approach, with all its emphasis on talking, has little gimmicks to get students to do things. In the real world, we do not achieve perfect comprehension, we do not take tests on what we read. We have to have proficiency and achieve tasks within a certain time, and even a certain amount of error is permissible or we

would never get done. But to act in the classroom as if we had all the time we want and attempt to achieve perfection is unrealistic.

Background knowledge and motivation help the students to read. In the case of novels, authors repeat themselves and as we go further and further in a book, there are fewer and fewer words to look up and comprehension gets easier.

The lack of knowledge of English, the lack of confidence in English is one of the big reasons why students are paralysed, in terms of transferring their strategies. So we must encourage them to take risks. Their errors must not be punished. They must be seen as developmental and part of the normal growth.

Guessing

For example, I have a successful technique for guessing in context. I teach students that it is OK to guess words occasionally and I try to give them some instruction in how to guess intelligently (A*nnex 3*). The secondary linguistic research has found that part of speech is an important clue to guessing the word. Here is an opportunity to use all that grammar that we teach them. They have to pay attention to whether it is a noun or an adjective. Native speakers, when they make mistakes, are substituting words for other words but do not switch nouns, verbs and adjectives. We really do produce language according to grammatical categories. So when you are trying to guess a word, and you identify it as an adjective, the brain only has to look through the adjectives of English and therefore this approach reduces the search effort and increases the efficiency of the search. Sometimes students do not think about this, they do not take advantage of what they know.

The problem with guessing is that the better you are at language and reading, the better guesser you are, and the worse you are, the worse guesser. So it is not a technique that is very useful for real beginners. But from the 3,000 word family level, students should be encouraged to start guessing. By the 5,000 word level, they should be really good guessers.

The dictionary

An alternative to guessing is skipping the word, and another one is to use the dictionary. But that is the last resort. Bensoussan and Sim in Israel did some research on a translation test they gave to students for a two-hour period, one group with dictionaries, one without. The results were approximately the same. Some thought they had a real advantage using the dictionary. But the time spent on the dictionary is time subtracted from thinking about the language and the background and all the rest. The dictionary is a crutch. The real problem is the students who use the crutch too long, who do not throw the crutch away. Obviously, in the beginning, you have to use the dictionary. But the danger is in overusing it. So when they get to 3,000 words they are better off guessing, skipping, and again, how often does a native speaker use a dictionary? Very rarely.

Krashen and the Input Hypothesis

Krashen argues that extensive reading is very compatible with his philosophy, the Input Hypothesis, which says that second language learning when it is successful, results from comprehensible input as the essential external ingredient coupled with a powerful internal language acquisition device (Krashen, 1989). A lot of people argue about the internal language acquisition device but my point is the comprehensible input. For reading to be successful it must be comprehensible. If we give students a text to read and they are not interested in it, or it has background knowledge that they do not have, for instance, an economics text and they are not in economics, even if they read it, even if they get out the dictionary and struggle through it, it was not a very successful reading event, it was not very comprehensible, they probably got minimal comprehension and they did not learn very much from it. Successful learning occurs when you have high comprehension. Vocabulary is entered into your mind much like spider webs. Your mind is like a room full of spider webs. All the words are inter-connected. Some connections are stronger than others. And the strong connections are between words that form semantic

sets, or networks as they are called, or associations, collocations (words that tend to occur together). Words are inter-connected and they are remembered that way and retrieved that way. The ability to remember words is fundamentally the result of the strength of the inter-connections of the associations made with those words. For example, the word "*sortie"* in French. I have overlearned it. I see it everywhere, every day of my life. I will never have to remember it ever again in my whole lifetime. But I do not know the word for *"entrance*"!

If we can give students lots of texts they will enjoy reading, that is one of the secrets: massive reading of pleasurable texts.

Parameters of extensive reading

We do not worry so much now about what words are in the text or how many tough words there are. Obviously, as a teacher, you want to pay some attention to that. But the most important criteria are reader interest, theme, the match between the background knowledge of the student and the text and then the linguistic and cultural authenticity of the text. We have learned through the vocabulary control movement that we get more mileage out of authentic texts.

Cognates

In France, students have an advantage. If we look at the 5,000 basic words, quite a lot of them are Anglo-Saxon. But over 50% of those are cognate to French. So the odds greatly favour that it is a true cognate, a true friend rather than a false one. Students do not take advantage of what they know. They do not use the background knowledge, in this case the relationship between French and English, that is to their advantage. They are afraid to, evidently, and that is the wrong strategy. A Chinese speaker does not have the same advantage. So students should be encouraged to use the cognates. About two-thirds of the low-frequency words, the specialised words, in English, are from Latin, French and Greek.

Technical vocabulary

Why bother to teach technical vocabulary? Technical vocabulary typically is defined in the text. The purpose of the text is to explain hydraulics or something. Students rarely have trouble with technical terms. What they have trouble with are what is called academic vocabulary, or sub-technical terms, like "hypothesis", "process", "account", etc. that are not defined in the text because they are not technical terms. But they are not highly frequent words in English. They are not among the first 5,000 and sometimes students have trouble with them. They do not recognise them, they are not sure what they mean and they occur very often in scientific and various types of academic texts because they are the negotiating words that we use. "A substantial amount of critical analysis was necessary for the following results": if they do not know one or two of those words, there is not much in that sentence to tell them what it means. There is an area of vocabulary here that may be worth teaching.

Reading task: Ladle Rat Rotten Hut *(Appendix 5)*

Do you recognise the words? They are all English words.

What's happening? First of all, some of you say, "Oh! Little Red Riding Hood!" And then the background knowledge triggers a whole series of thoughts and ideas in your head that make it easier to read the text.

You also have to read it out loud to recognise it. This is exactly what happens to a child, with 5,000 words, who gets into school one day and the teacher hands him/her this, a white page with black marks on it, and says, "Read this". Children typically read it aloud. And as they read it aloud they recognise the words they already know. You just went through a beginner's reading exercise. Beginning readers want to read aloud because only then can you recognise what the words are, by hearing them and mapping them into your knowledge of spoken language. Proficient readers read silently and therefore have trouble with this text. But if you read with intonation, paying attention to punctuation, quotation marks, all those clues help. All those things

we take for granted, they help. Ancient Hebrew had no punctuation, the words were not separated and those texts are now ambiguous because no one knows how to cut the words.

Quite often our students are faced with the same dilemma. They are looking at a text, they do not know what it means, they do not have skills and they get frustrated.

I hope all of the above ideas will help you to help your students to learn vocabulary successfully through extensive reading.

Appendix 1

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IMPROVING READING RATE
Dr James Coady & Dr. Neil Anderson, Ohio University

The following five reading rate activities can be used in the EFL reading/writing class to increase student reading rate and thereby increase the efficiency of word recognition.

Rate Buildup Reading

Students are given sixty seconds to read as much material as they can. They then begin reading again from the beginning of the text and are given an additional sixty seconds. They are urged to read more material during the second sixty second period than in the first. The drill is repeated a third and a fourth time. The purpose of this activity is to reread "old" material quickly, gliding into the new. As they force themselves to read more quickly, they actually learn how to process and comprehend the material more efficiently. As students begin to succeed at this exercise they realize that they can increase their reading rate without sacrificing comprehension.

Repeated Reading

Students read a short passage over and over again until they achieve preset criterion levels of reading rate and comprehension. For example, they may try to read a short 100 word paragraph four times in two minutes. The criterion levels may vary from class to class, but reasonable goals to work towards are criterion levels of 200 words per minute at 70 % comprehension.

Class-Paced Reading

This activity requires a class discussion regarding a goal for minimal reading rate. Once that goal is established, then the average number of words per page of the material is calculated. It is then determined how much material needs to be read in one minute to meet the class goal. Authentic materials typically contain approximately 10-12 words per line and 25-30 lines per page or approximately 250-350 words per page. Pedagogical material will usually be less dense. For example, if the class goal is to read 250 words per minute and the material being read has an average of 125 words per page, the class would be expected to read one page every 30 seconds. As each minute elapsed, the teacher would indicate to the class to move to the next page. Students are encouraged to keep up with the established class goal. Of course, those who read faster than 250 wpm are not expected to slow down as long as they are ahead of the designated page.

Self-Paced Reading

The procedures for this activity are very similar to the class-paced activity outlined above. During this reading rate activity the students determine their own goal for reading rate. They then determine how much material need to be read in a sixty second period to meet their objective rate. This activity proceeds nicely by having each student mark off several chunks of lines and silently read for a period of 5-7 minutes with the instructor calling out minute times.

Additional Activities

In addition to these four specific classroom reading rate activities, students can be given a variety of reading passages and multiple choice comprehension questions such as those found in many rate building texts (Fry, 1975, Harris, 1966, Spargo & Williston, 1980). They can then set their own individual goals for reading rate and reading comprehension. Students can be encouraged to work

towards a goal of reading at least 200 wpm with a least 70 % comprehension. They should be encouraged to keep records of the rates and scores they achieve on the various passages they read. They can realize their goals when they have read a contiguous group of 4-5 texts successfully. At this point they can either raise their reading rate goal or they can increase the general difficulty of the material being read.

A SUCCESSFUL TECHNIQUE FOR GUESSING IN CONTEXT

Nation (***Teaching and Learning Vocabulary***, 1990) presents a strategy for successful guessing in context in 5 steps :

First, determine the part of speech of the unknown word.
Second, use the immediate context to make a preliminary guess.
Third, use the wider context of the preceding and following sentences to refine that guess, and especially the following context if the word appears again.
Fourth, explicitly arrive at a synonym or paraphrase of the word.
Fifth, check on your guess, usually by using any word part analysis available to you or asking the teacher or another source. Finally, check on your guess by looking at the dictionary.

In the first step one determines the part of speech of the unknown word. Students should be taught to work from the structural cues of the sentence. Teachers could use a sentence made up of nonsense words to give students the general idea.
The sploony urdle kneafed norilly.
What is the sentence about ? (*the urdle*) What did the urdle do ? (*kneafed*) How did it kneaf ? (*norilly*) What sort of urdle was it ? (*sploony*)

Subsequently, use real sentences with only one nonsense word per sentence to help them to see how much meaning can be derived even with no knowledge at all of the target word.

Then use real sentences with low frequency words which they again must guess at. If need be, they can check their guesses with a dictionary. Pair work and group work fits these types of exercises very well.

The second step uses the wider context :

1. She found the goze on the table.

2. She picked up the goze and examined it.

3. Unfortunately, she could not find a way to open it.

What is a *goze* ? In the first sentence, it is a noun and has at least one flat side. In the second sentence, it is small enough to be picked up and is not a thing which can be easily recognized, at least by this person. In the third sentence, it is a box-like thing which, she thinks, can be opened but she doesn't know how to do so. With each sentence the original guess is modified and expanded. Native speakers infer the properties of a word from the context extensively and automatically. Notice how rarely they use a dictionary ! Our students usually don't have enough confidence and/or knowledge to do this as easily and fluently as native speakers. But the sooner we get them to do so, the better.

In the fourth step, could a goze be a music box or jewelry box?

Fifth, check on the guess by using any word part analysis available, or by asking the teacher or another source. Finally check the guess in the dictionary.

GOOD LEARNER STRATEGIES IN VOCABULARY ACQUISITION

1. Good vocabulary learners have strategies which make them independent of the teacher (and the dictionary). In the beginning they should learn the 3000 highly frequent words to the point of automaticity. After that they should encounter as many words as possible without necessarily learning them very well.

2. The original mental entry (schema) for a new word is influenced heavily by the L1 schema or even directly translated from it. The learner should be aware of this and gradually modify such schema in accordance with the various different meanings of the target word.

3. Accordingly, wide experience in the language is necessary to encounter the target vocabulary in a variety of contexts and to learn the less frequent words and build mental semantic networks.

4. In the early stages explicit memorization techniques are useful. Use mental pictures, images, associations, etc. to learn words. Learn the fixed expressions such as greetings, frequent idioms, etc.

5. Words are originally stored in the mind according to their form rather than meaning. Avoid confusion arising from similar forms. Practise in small amounts over a given period of time rather than in one long practice session.

6. Good strategies for identifying unknown words which are found in a meaningful context are guessing, using information from the context, using word parts, analyzing syntax cues, skipping the word, regressing, pronouncing it aloud, and using a dictionary.

7. The most important strategy (Clarke & Nation, 1980) is guessing by using context clues :
    Decide the part of speech
    Use the immediate context
    Use the wider context
    Guess
    Check your guess by substituting and, if necessary, checking against the word parts. Use morphemic analysis last, not first.

8. Such a guess can also be checked in the dictionary, if necessary, and with much more success after the guessing technique is used. Use a monolingual dictionary as soon as possible.

9. A good strategy to use an unknown word when speaking is to paraphrase, this must be practised in order to be successful. Unknown words can often be ignored, as long as the basic meaning or gist is understood.

10. Most successful vocabulary learning happens when the learner uses the language for meaningful communication.

Ladle Rat Rotten Hut

Wants pawn term, dare worsted ladle gull hoe lift wetter murder inner ladle cordage honor itch offer lodge dock florist. Disc ladle gull orphan worry ladle cluck wetter putty ladle rat hut, end fur disc raisin pimple colder ladle rat rotten hut. Wan moaning rat rotten hut's murder colder inset: "Ladle rat rotten hut, heresy ladle basking winsome burden barter and shirker cockles. Tick disc ladle basking tudor cordage offer groin murder hoe lifts honor udder site offer florist. Shaker lake, dun stopper laundry wrote, end yonder no sorghum stenches dun stopper torque wet strainers."

"Hoe-cake, murder," resplendent ladle rat rotten hut, end tickle ladle basking an stuttered oft. Honor wrote tudor cordage offer groin murder, ladle rat rotten hut mitten anomalous woof.

"Wail, wail, wail," set disc wicket woof, "evanescent ladle rat rotten hut! Ware or putty ladle gull goring wizard ladle basking?"

"Armor goring tumor groin murder's," reprisal ladle gull. "Grammars seeking bet. Armor ticking arson burden barter end shirker cockles."

"O hoe! Heifer blessing woke," setter wicket woof, butter taught tomb shelf, "Oil tickle shirt court tudor cordage offer groin murder. Oil ketchup wetter letter, and den—O bore! "

Soda wicket woof tucker shirt court, end whinny retched a cordage offer groin murder, pick dinner window an sore debtor pore oil worming worse lion inner bet. Inner flesh disc abdominal woof lipped honor betting adder rope. Any pool dawn a groin murder's nut cup and gnat gun, any curdle dope inner bet.

Inner ladle wile ladle rat rotten hut a raft attar cordage an ranker dough bell. "Comb ink, sweat hard," setter wicket woof, disgracing is verse. Ladle rat rotten hut entity bet rum end stud buyer groin murder's bet. "Oh grammar," crater ladle gull, "Wart bag icer gut! A nervous sausage bag ice!" "Buttered lucky chew whiff, doling," whiskered

disc ratchet woof, wetter wicket small. "Oh grammar, water bag noise! A nervous sore suture anomalous prognosis!" "Buttered small your whiff," inserter woof, ants mouse worse waddling. "Oh grammar, water bag mousey gut! A nervous sore suture bag mouse!"

Daze worry on forger nut gull's lest warts. Oil offer sodden throne offer carvers and sprinkling otter bet, disc curl and bloat Thursday woof ceased pore ladle rat rotten hut and garbled erupt.

Mural: Yonder nor sorghum stenches shut ladle gulls stopper torque wet strainers.
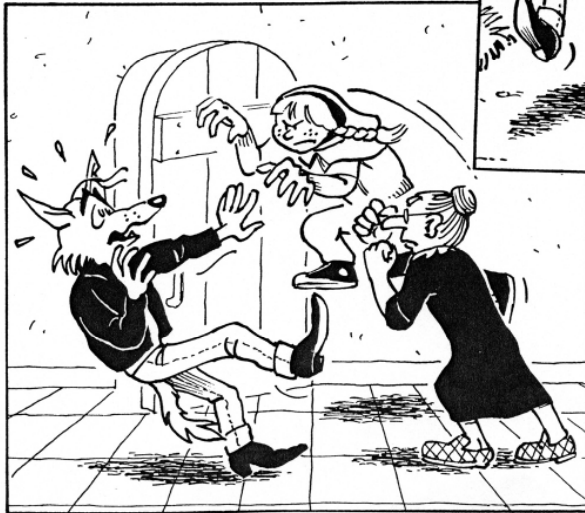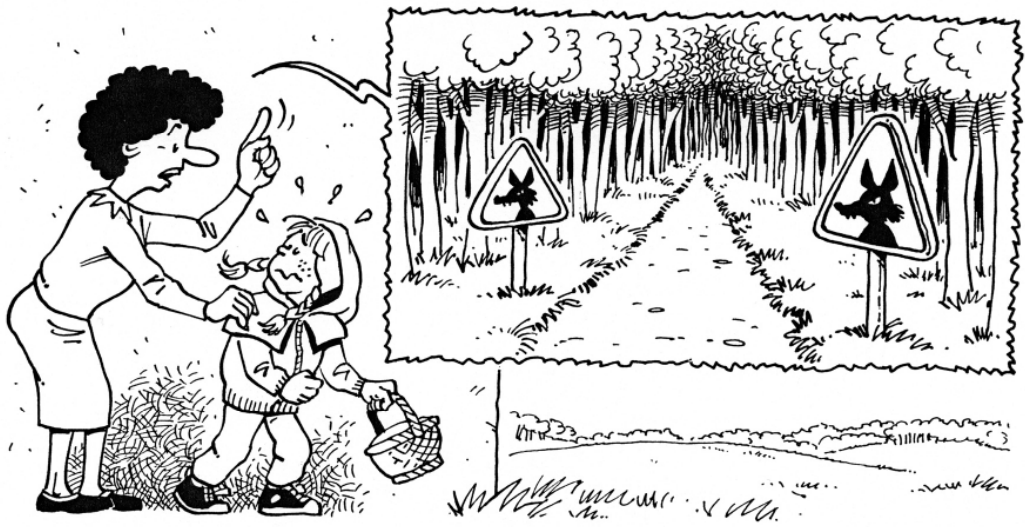
CONTRIBUTIONS DE LAIRDIL

L'anglais de spécialité

Bien que peu développé, ce que dit le professeur Coady concernant la lecture de documents techniques ne peut qu'intéresser les enseignants d'anglais en formations scientifiques qui se posent souvent la question de savoir s'il est pertinent de faire apprendre du vocabulaire dit de spécialité. C'est en tout cas la question que plusieurs années d'enseignement dans un département de génie mécanique d'IUT m'ont amenées à me poser, moins d'ailleurs pour la raison qu'il invoque, à savoir que ce vocabulaire pose peu ou pas de problèmes aux étudiants, que parce que ces mêmes étudiants, qui ont certes une formation commune travailleront par la suite dans des secteurs industriels extrêmement divers.

Une des questions posées dans une enquête faite auprès d'anciens élèves portait sur l'utilité d'apprendre la langue de spécialité. Les réponses recueillies pourraient toutes se résumer par la réflexion de J. Coady: "Why bother to teach vocabulary?"

En voici quelques-unes pour preuves:
" (...) *Les termes très spécialisés ne peuvent guère relever d'un enseignement à l'école; ils s'apprennent sur le tas,"* (un ingénieur du Département Automatique au centre d'Etudes et de recherche de Toulouse).
"(...) *souhaitable, mais difficile, car nombreuses spécialités et on tombe souvent à côté,"* (un technicien du service après-vente chez Alsthom).
"(...) *souhaitable, mais quelle spécialité choisir avant de choisir son entreprise?"* (un cadre du contrôle de qualité à la SNIAS).
"(...) *inutile, en raison du très grand nombre de spécialités existant dans le monde du travail,."* (un agent du service de traduction et de gestion des études dans une industrie de construction de centrales thermiques et nucléaires).
"(...) *inutile, la diversité des spécialités en fait quelque chose d'illusoire,"* (un technicien supérieur d'un laboratoire de construction électromécanique).

En revanche, les ouvrages consacrés à l'anglais de spécialité ne mettent pas ou pas suffisamment l'accent sur ce que J. Coady appelle le vocabulaire académique et que l'on pourrait qualifier de "transversal" dans la mesure où, contrairement aux termes pointus propres à une spécialité, on retrouve, et en grand nombre, les termes qui le constituent dans n'importe quel texte scientifique ou technique et dans quelque domaine que ce soit. Une étude en cours sur ce sujet montre que les mêmes termes se retrouvent dans les quatre grands types de documents techniques dépouillés (catalogues de produits, publicités pour matériels, notices de montage, d'utilisation et d'entretien, revues techniques spécialisées) appartenant à diverses spécialités (mécanique, génie civil, électricité, métallurgie). Nous ne citerons à titre d'exemples qu'une dizaine de mots ou familles de mots, en indiquant le nombre d'occurrences relevées par texte.

adjustment, to adjust, adjusted, adjustable (3 à 21)
application, to apply, applied, applicable (1 à 7)
control, to control (1 à 12)
design, to design, designed (1 à 12)
fittings, to fit, fitted (1 à 5)
operation, to operate, operated, operator (3 à 12)
to provide (1 à 5)
to remove (1 à 3)
requirements, to require, required (4 à 8)
supply, to supply, supplied (2 à 13)

Devant leur grande fréquence d'emploi et leur caractère général, on rejoint la conclusion de J. Coady : il y a là un domaine de vocabulaire qui vaut la peine d'être enseigné. Mais contrairement aux 5 000 mots de base qui ont été recensés, l'étude systématique et exhaustive de ces outils indispensables à la lecture de textes scientifiques ou techniques reste à faire.

Aimée Blois

Mise en pratique des conseils de Coady et autres suggestions

Pour essayer quelques-unes des techniques préconisées par Coady avec des étudiant(e)s avancé(e)s, il leur a été donné un article assez long de *Ms. Magazine*, de 244 lignes, soit à peu près 2 300 mots ("Sister From Another Planet Probes the Soaps" d'Andrea Freud Loewenstein, nov.-déc. 1993, pp. 76-79).

Rate buildup reading

Les étudiant(e)s ont lu trois fois le début du texte, pendant une minute chaque fois. A chaque lecture, le nombre de lignes a augmenté, ce qui n'est pas surprenant puisque le texte devient de plus en plus familier. A la première lecture, les étudiant(e)s ont lu entre 12 et 24 lignes par minute. Quelques-un(e)s ont réussi à lire 34 lignes à la troisième lecture.

Nous avons élucidé le vocabulaire et les problèmes de compréhension, notamment nous avons défini ce qu'est un "soap opera". Un certain nombre n'avait pas réalisé que le texte était censé être écrit par un(e) extraterrestre, malgré le titre et une description très graphique du/de la narrateur/trice, d'un vert iridescent avec des taches ocre, flottant à angle droit et possédant dix-sept "détecteurs". Bien que je les ai averti(e)s qu'ils /elles devaient lire, non pas le plus vite possible, mais le plus vite possible **en comprenant** ce qui était lu, de toute évidence certain(e)s ont essayé de lire le maximum de mots sans faire attention au sens. Considérer l'exercice uniquement comme un exercice de vitesse annule son intérêt.

Repeated reading

Les étudiant(e)s ont ensuite tenté de lire les lignes 31-44 autant de fois que possible en deux minutes. Il y a eu encore de grandes

différences entre les étudiant(e)s variant entre moins d'une fois et un peu plus de deux fois.

Nous avons de nouveau élucidé les problèmes de lexique de cette partie. A partir de ce moment-là, le sujet était bien cerné.

Class-paced reading

Les étudiant(e)s ont défini leur objectif, lire 25 lignes par minute en moyenne et, en général, y sont arrivé.

Nous avons alors décidé de lire entre 18 et 20 lignes par minute pendant dix minutes. Les étudiant(e)s ont fait des marques de repère toutes les 18 ou 20 lignes sur l'article et ont commencé à lire. J'annonçais la fin de chaque minute pendant la lecture. Dans l'ensemble, tou(te)s sont arrivé(e)s à lire à la vitesse requise. A la fin des dix minutes, un certain nombre avait terminé l'article.

Avantages principaux de ces techniques

Lire un long texte en classe représente toujours un problème car certain(e)s mettent deux fois plus de temps que d'autres. J'avais renoncé à la lecture en classe il y a plusieurs années, sauf à lire le texte moi-même ou passer un enregistrement de ce texte.

Ici, le défi de lire à une certaine vitesse, en sachant à tout moment si l'on maintenait la cadence ou si l'on prenait du retard a servi de motivation. Personne n'a rêvassé ou parlé à son/sa voisin(e) pendant la lecture. La concentration s'est maintenue à un niveau élevé. Comme pour tant d'autres activités, je pense toutefois que le choix du contenu est prépondérant: il faut que le texte ne comporte pas de difficultés majeures et qu'il soit immédiatement intéressant. Ici, l'humour d'un texte pseudo-scientifique était facilement saisissable. Beaucoup riaient ou souriaient en lisant.

Autres techniques

Citons deux techniques dont je me sers fréquemment pour la lecture en classe.

Faits divers

Choisir une vingtaine d'articles de journaux très courts et en faire un montage pour recouvrir une feuille de format A3. Numéroter les articles. Préparer un questionnaire d'une cinquantaine de questions de détail. Demander aux étudiant(e)s de lire les articles aussi vite que possible en essayant de mémoriser les informations puisque la lecture sera suivie d'un "quiz" entre équipes.

Quand la plupart ont terminé, diviser la classe en deux, trois ou quatre équipes et poser les questions. Les étudiant(e)s n'ont à répondre que par le numéro de l'article concerné.

ex.: *In which article is a cobra mentioned?*
Which one takes place in China?

L'équipe qui répond correctement la première reçoit un point. Le rythme doit être rapide et les questions nombreuses, regroupées par catégories peut-être.

Dans une deuxième partie, les groupes peuvent préparer leurs propres questions pour interroger les autres.

Textes similaires

Donner à chaque groupe de quatre ou cinq étudiant(e)s quatre ou cinq articles de différents journaux sur un même événement ou un même sujet (par exemple le monstre du Loch Ness). Leur donner également un questionnaire. Dans un premier temps, chaque étudiant(e) remplit de son mieux le questionnaire en utilisant les informations de son texte. Ensuite, le groupe met ses informations en commun, complète et compare. L'exercice devient vraiment intéressant quand les étudiant(e)s se rendent compte des énormes différences d'un journal à l'autre et donc de la difficulté de s'informer réellement.

Ecriture rapide

L'écriture est un autre exercice qui prend beaucoup de temps en classe à cause de l'extrême lenteur de beaucoup d'étudiant(e)s pour rédiger quelques phrases. On peut cependant pratiquer un exercice de vitesse qui ressemble par ses principes à ceux de Coady (Paul Davis, Mario Rinvolucri, *The Confidence Book*, London: Longman, 1990, p. 35).

Donner un sujet "bateau", les vacances, par exemple, ou les examens. Chronométrer le temps. Les étudiant(e)s écrivent pendant trois minutes le maximum de mots, en essayant toutefois de faire des phrases correctes et complètes. Puis ils/elles comptent le nombre de mots écrits. Ce comptage surprend, car il n'est pas dans les habitudes françaises, mais intéresse, surtout dans les phases ultérieures, comme moyen de mesurer le progrès.

Recommencer l'exercice avec un autre sujet. La plupart arrivent à écrire un peu plus la deuxième fois.

La troisième fois, ils/elles choisissent un sujet et écrivent pendant trois minutes. Curieusement, ils/elles écrivent souvent moins!!! Habitude de la tâche imposée? Mauvais choix de sujet? Complexité du sujet?

Davis et Rinvolucri préconisent de faire se déplacer les étudiant(e)s entre chaque phase, pour se décontracter. Cet aspect ludique, en donnant à l'exercice une couleur de performance sportive, peut contribuer à la motivation.

Nicole Décuré

Expérience de lecture

Beaucoup parlent aujourd'hui d'une crise de la lecture qui certes, d'après les experts, existe mais qui est loin d'être démesurée. En tant qu'enseignants de langues, nous sommes confrontés à ce problème puisque nous savons que l'apprentissage d'une langue étrangère passe, entre autres, par la lecture. Je distinguerai d'ailleurs ici deux niveaux : l'apprentissage d'une langue dans le but de la posséder et d'être le plus performant possible à l'écrit comme à l'oral et l'apprentissage d'une langue dont le but ne serait pas d' "apprendre véritablement cette langue" mais d'apprendre à comprendre un document écrit rédigé dans cette langue. Par document écrit j'entends une notice, une documentation quelle qu'elle soit, une revue professionnelle surtout dans les secteurs de l'électronique, de l'informatique, de la mécanique, de l'audiovisuel ou activités annexes. J. Coady n'a pas traité de ce deuxième apprentissage dans sa conférence. Il s'est penché sur l'apprentissage d'une langue en vue d'en élargir le vocabulaire, la compréhension, voire la maîtrise et de susciter chez l'apprenant un intérêt grandissant qui passerait par l'enrichissement de la lecture. Ce que dit J. Coady, et les "recettes" qu'il donne, nous semblent intéressant et stimulant pour l'apprenant. Combien, en effet, croient comprendre mieux en lisant lentement ?

J'ai testé l'exercice intitulé "Rate buildup reading" et les étudiants ont été très surpris de constater l'efficacité de la technique. L'exercice a suscité des commentaires, des révélations de la part des plus forts comme des plus faibles et un intérêt non dissimulé qu'il est, nous le savons tous, si difficile à éveiller chez la plupart. Le caractère ludique de l'exercice le rend encore plus attrayant.

A l'issue du cours, j'ai "osé" distribuer d'autres textes à lire en demandant de suivre la même approche. Les résultats ont été, dans l'ensemble, positifs, ce qui nous a permis d'envisager un "module lecture" dans les semaines à venir, en accord avec les étudiants. Je leur donnerai à lire une fois par semaine un texte long de une à deux pages, tiré d'un magazine, d'un hebdomadaire, ou de *Vocable*. Nous

n'analyserons pas le texte ensemble mais un étudiant volontaire le résumera en début du cours, en précisant le temps qu'il a mis pour le lire et, bien sûr, le comprendre. Parallèlement, les étudiants particulièrement intéressés par l'anglais commenceront la lecture d'un même livre en anglais - en l'occurrence **The Catcher in the Rye** de J.D. Salinger - et s'astreindront à lire un chapitre par semaine. Les autres exercices proposés par J. Coady permettront de varier les plaisirs et d'arriver, je l'espère, à un bilan positif. Il faut souligner que la méthode ne peut évidemment porter ses fruits que si elle est régulièrement pratiquée et qu'il est donc primordial pour nous enseignants, de fournir à nos étudiants des textes et du matériel susceptibles de les intéresser. Dans un premier temps, il me semble préférable de donner des textes relativement courts pour permettre au lecteur de se rendre compte que sa faculté de compréhension et d'interprétation est finalement plus grande qu'il ne pensait.

Françoise Lavinal

Une vraie débutante face à la lecture de publications en anglais :
Etude de cas

Introduction

Soheila, une gynécologue iranienne de 27 ans, a besoin de lire des publications en anglais avant de rédiger sa thèse. Elle n'a jamais fait d'anglais et dispose de très peu de temps.

Elle a appris le français en Iran sans le pratiquer, jusqu'à son arrivée en France, à 18 ans, pour faire ses études de médecine. Les premiers mois ont été pénibles, mais elle a progressé en travaillant ses cours, en restant à l'écart de ses compatriotes et en parlant avec des Français. Cette expérience réussie est un bon point de départ.

Je fais l'hypothèse qu'une dizaine d'heures de tutorat, à raison de six séances de 1h30 réparties sur deux mois, suffiraient à la rendre autonome pour la lecture d'articles de gynécologie.

Soheila va nous permettre d'observer comment une vraie débutante procède pour lire dans une langue étrangère, lorsqu'elle connaît bien le domaine abordé.

Au delà de cette expérience isolée, ce cas soulève le problème des méthodes à employer pour acheminer l'apprenant adulte vers l'autonomie, quand l'objectif est précis et le temps limité. Quelles sont les priorités? Existe-t-il des raccourcis? Quel est le bagage linguistique minimum dont a besoin un médecin pour lire dans sa spécialité?

L'expérience

Pour la première session, nous utilisons un article sur les malformations des nouveau-nés que je traduis à haute voix en suivant les mots du texte anglais avec la pointe d'un crayon, tout en m'enregistrant au magnétophone. Ceci devrait permettre à Soheila de réviser le texte, sans l'aide du dictionnaire.

Très vite, elle réclame des explications sur les temps des verbes, les formes interrogatives et négatives, les modaux. Je la renvoie aux tableaux de la **Grammaire de A à Z**.

Elle note le vocabulaire de son choix : quelques verbes et adverbes, des conjonctions et prépositions. Elle a besoin de voir les mots nouveaux écrits de sa main et commente : "*Je me fais des exemples. Je veux analyser le système. Je veux y arriver seule.*" Elle interrompt ma traduction pour commenter le contenu de l'article dont les chiffres la surprennent. Elle va droit au message. A ces moments là, j'ai l'impression que la langue n'est absolument pas un obstacle mais simplement un outil.

Vers la fin de la session, elle surfe sur ce qu'elle reconnaît, comme sur des vagues. Par moments, elle reprend une phrase qui l'intéresse ou qu'elle a trouvé difficile et se répète la traduction. Elle trouve les mots anglais proches des mots français, et essaie toujours de deviner. Mais certaines structures différentes l'agacent :*"Je suis très française. J'ai l'esprit français. Je n'accepte pas que les anglais mettent l'adverbe où ils le mettent."*

Au bout de deux heures, elle emploie le persan par inadvertance, ce qui est exceptionnel, dit-elle. Sous l'effet de la fatigue, les registres s'embrouillent.

A la deuxième session, Soheila, esprit indépendant, n'a pas respecté les consignes qui étaient de réviser le texte de la première session avec l'aide de la cassette de traduction. Elle a essayé de décrypter la suite de l'article avec le dictionnaire et s'est découragée. Elle a revu le verbe *être* à tous les temps et lu la grammaire, sans grand profit.

A cette seconde séance, elle repousse mon aide et insiste pour traduire elle-même. Elle devine à partir de ce qu'elle croit reconnaître et confond : *might / means / mind*. Son désir d'autonomie prévaut : "*Ne dis rien. Attends. Je sais*". Elle m'empêche d'intervenir, sauf lorsqu'elle butte sur deux structures difficiles :

1 - *Meconism was observed... although with no greater frequency in the babies who did not survive than in those who did.*

2 - *So that whether a direct relationship exists ...*

Elle continue de noter les mots de vocabulaire qui lui semblent importants, avec un sens aigu des priorités :"*Ca, il faut absolument que je le sache*".

J'explique le comparatif et le superlatif.

Sa principale difficulté consiste à distinguer les verbes des noms pour pouvoir analyser la phrase, mais le désir de connaître le contenu de l'article l'aide à poursuivre.

Je lui recommande de réviser le premier texte en s'aidant de la cassette, puis sans la cassette.

Entre la deuxième et la troisième session, espacées de quinze jours, Soheila a fourni 12 heures de travail personnel. Elle a révisé le premier article et a passé 5 heures à lire une trentaine de résumés (*abstracts*), avec le dictionnaire. "*Il fallait que j'avance.*"

Elle a établi une liste de huit grandes pages de vocabulaire qu'elle souhaite maintenant mémoriser.

J'essaie de la convaincre d'effectuer un tri des mots dont elle a le besoin le plus urgent et de faire porter ses efforts sur ses stratégies de mémorisation. Comment peut-elle le mieux mémoriser le lexique? Le meilleur moment, pour elle, est le matin au petit déjeuner.

Je suggère d'effectuer divers classements, d'écrire les mots en couleurs, d'afficher des pense-bêtes.

La notion de familles de mots mentionnée par Coady (*weak, weakly, weakness*) s'avère très utile pour diminuer l'effort de mémoire.

Elle maîtrise bien le verbe *être*; elle demande confirmation d'une phrase un peu longue avec un conditionnel.

J'explique la forme impersonnelle et la place de l'adverbe.

Bien qu'elle ait du mal à aller chercher le nom en fin de chaîne nominale, elle lit à la vitesse d'une mitraillette, en devinant avec intrépidité. Pour les mots nouveaux, le français aide, dit-elle. *"Une fois que je suis lancée, je comprends où sont le nom, le verbe et les temps."*

Devant moi, elle lit seule deux pages et demie d'un texte serré en 1h45.

Conclusion

La formation a été plus brève que celle prévue initialement puisque après trois séances de tutorat (soit environ 6 heures) et une vingtaine d'heures de révision et d'exploration personnelle, Soheila est, sinon tout à fait indépendante, du moins bien en voie de le devenir.

Il reste des problèmes avec les phrases longues, surtout si elle sont mal écrites et avec des incises car elle ne distingue pas toujours la fonction des mots (s'agit-il d'un nom ou d'un verbe?) mais la progression a été excessivement rapide.

On peut objecter que l'intelligence, la mémoire, la motivation de Soheila sont exceptionnelles. Son désir de se débrouiller seule et l'ardeur qu'elle met au travail ont favorisé l'autonomie. Par ailleurs, sa connaissance préalable du sujet a facilité l'apprentissage de la lecture en lui permettant de formuler des hypothèses et d'éviter les contresens. Ce cas plaide en faveur de l'utilisation de textes authentiques non simplifiés, même avec des débutants et montre la valeur de la lecture extensive pour l'apprentissage du vocabulaire.

Le vocabulaire de spécialité n'a quasiment jamais posé problème.

Sur tous ces points l'opinion de Coady est donc confirmée.

L'étape suivante consistera à effectuer un comptage des mots courants les plus fréquents dans ce type d'articles afin d'en faciliter l'accès à des non-spécialistes de l'anglais.

Anne Péchou

Lignes et feuilles

L'utilisation que les futurs gestionnaires auront à faire de l'anglais est difficile à anticiper puisqu'elle dépendra largement de la nature de l'entreprise où ils travailleront et du poste qu'ils y occuperont.

On peut néanmoins avancer, avec quelque chance de ne pas se tromper, qu'ils n'auront que rarement besoin de produire une traduction en bonne et due forme des documents en anglais qu'ils auront à traiter. Au contraire, la capacité à lire rapidement un texte, à en repérer les articulations et les informations importantes et à organiser leur restitution, sous une forme synthétique, leur sera extrêmement précieuse. Or, force est de constater que peu d'étudiants sont capables de le faire.

De manière spontanée on constate deux types de comportements. Le plus courant consiste à ne pas lire le texte en entier une première fois et à faire plus ou moins explicitement une "traduction" de ce qui est lu de manière linéaire. Cet empressement à se mettre à la tâche est accompagné, la plupart du temps, d'un souverain mépris du titre, sans parler des sous-titres, des éléments de typographie et des différents graphes, diagrammes et autres illustrations qui s'y rattachent. Cette énergie "traductionnelle" se trouve immédiatement ralentie par les embûches sémantiques, lexicales ou grammaticales de tous genres, quand elle n'est pas totalement anéantie à la fin du premier paragraphe. Le résultat est inutilisable et le "traducteur" déçu. Pour emprunter le jargon de leur spécialité il n'y a aucun "retour sur investissement".

Le second comportement est a priori plus prometteur. Le lecteur lit tout le texte et note les éléments qui lui paraissent importants, sans essayer de tout comprendre ni de tout traduire. La récolte d'informations est, selon les individus, plus ou moins riche. Le problème est alors de les ré-agencer afin d'obtenir une synthèse claire, cohérente, ordonnée et non redondante. Il faut donc dans un second temps tout reprendre et procéder à un classement. En tout état de cause, la recherche des informations s'étant faite de façon linéaire, en suivant le plan de l'auteur, tous les éléments du discours sont mis au

même niveau. Ce que Janine Gallais-Hamono[1] appelle le discours pédagogique (la trame rhétorique du texte) et le discours scientifique (ce qui a trait à l'objet même du texte) ne sont pas distingués. L'étudiant se retrouve alors avec, au mieux, la même information qu'au début de son travail; il est souvent découragé d'avoir travaillé, pour en fin de compte, n'être pas plus avancé.

Nous proposons donc aux étudiants de procéder de manière différente, en plusieurs étapes.

1- Il est d'abord important de retirer un maximum d'informations sémantiques des titres, sous-titres ainsi que des données graphiques ou illustrations qui accompagnent l'article. A ce stade, et provisoirement, l'étudiant peut s'aider du dictionnaire, d'une grammaire, ou de tout autre source d'informations, de manière à bien comprendre le message et à en retirer une ou plusieurs "lignes de lecture". On appelle "ligne de lecture" un groupe de signes facilement identifiables. Il peut s'agir du vocabulaire d'un domaine particulier comme "*bank, banking, revolving loan*", etc., de chiffres ou de noms propres. Dans l'exemple indiqué ci-dessous, "A Varied Menu of Benefits: Companies are offering employees 'cafeteria-style' choices", on reconnaîtra deux registres sémantiques: d'un côté la restauration avec "*varied menu*", et "*cafeteria-style*", de l'autre les entreprises avec "*benefits*", "*companies*" et "*employees*". L'illustration confirmera la métaphore culinaire avec un plateau sur lequel se trouve déjà une tasse de café, ainsi que des étagères de libre-service, dans laquelle reviennent les avantages sociaux offerts par les entreprises aux salariés représentés par le client sur l'image. Dans ce cas, des "lignes de lectures" évidentes peuvent être prises dans ces deux registres: qui offre quoi? C'est à dire:

a) Quelles entreprises?

b) Quels avantages?

c) Une troisième ligne émerge naturellement: pourquoi?

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[1] Groupe de Recherche et de Formation A.T.R.I.L. Séminaire: "Analyse Syntaxique des langues de spécialité" 7-9 octobre 1981 E.N.S., rue d'Ulm.

2 - La seconde étape va consister à faire une première lecture rapide du texte (*cf.* James Coady supra) avec un objectif **bien précis** (repérer les noms ou types d'entreprises) et à les surligner d'une couleur (par exemple jaune). Cette première tâche doit être précise et bien délimitée. Dans ce cas, il s'agit de repérer des noms propres dont on s'aperçoit qu'ils sont suivis de "*inc.*", "*corp.*" et de chiffres (ex.: "*1882 assets: $7.4 billion*"). Le rôle de cette première lecture quelque peu automatique est de soutenir l'attention du lecteur et de l'amener jusqu'à la fin du texte.

3 - Dans la troisième étape, la lecture ne se fera plus de façon linéaire mais en "taches d'huile" à partir des passages surlignés. Dans l'exemple donné on recherchera les différents avantages octroyés par les sociétés déjà repérées et on les surlignera d'une seconde couleur (par exemple rose). La lecture ne se fait plus paragraphe par paragraphe mais en spirale autour des noms des entreprises. On saute ainsi de société en société. De la même manière, une troisième lecture permettra de repérer les raisons qui poussent les entreprises à offrir ces avantages à leurs employés ainsi que celles qui poussent ces derniers à les accepter à la place d'augmentations de salaire.

Au fur et à mesure des différentes lectures, le texte se recouvre de zones de couleurs différentes qu'ils sera ensuite facile de relire en les regroupant. Il arrive qu'en cours de lecture, on repère une nouvelle "ligne de lecture". Il suffit alors de faire une autre lecture et de surligner d'une autre couleur.

4 - L'étape suivante consiste à effectuer une vérification éventuelle à l'aide des dictionnaires, lexiques ou grammaires qui n'étaient plus utilisés depuis l'étape 1.

5 - Le texte est maintenant largement surligné de différentes couleurs et l'on repère aisément les passages qui n'ont pas été colorés. Ils correspondent soit à des "lignes de lecture" qui n'ont pas été repérées dans les titres sous-titres, etc., ni lors des précédentes lectures, soit à des passages de discours pédagogique qui renforcent des éléments déjà traités ou, très souvent ne sont porteurs d'aucune information factuelle.

Cette méthode nous a permis de faire accéder à la lecture d'articles en anglais de spécialité, un grand nombre d'étudiants qui n'avaient aucune méthode et qui calaient définitivement sur les premiers obstacles. Pour les aider, nous leur donnons dans les premiers temps une feuille de lecture qui leur montre la voie et leur permet de reporter les informations recueillies pour les vérifier. Très rapidement ces feuilles ne sont plus utiles et les étudiants déterminent eux-mêmes leurs propres "lignes de lecture". Il est alors intéressant de leur demander de procéder à des comparaisons entre leurs différents travaux, de sorte qu'ils réalisent qu'un texte peut être abordé de plusieurs manières. Ils se trouvent alors loin de la tentation de trouver "la" traduction exacte, encore que c'est maintenant, après cette préparation qu'elle pourrait être envisagée.

Christine Vaillant

A VARIED MENU OF BENEFITS

COMPANIES   **BENEFITS**   **VOCABULARY**

MOTIVATIONS

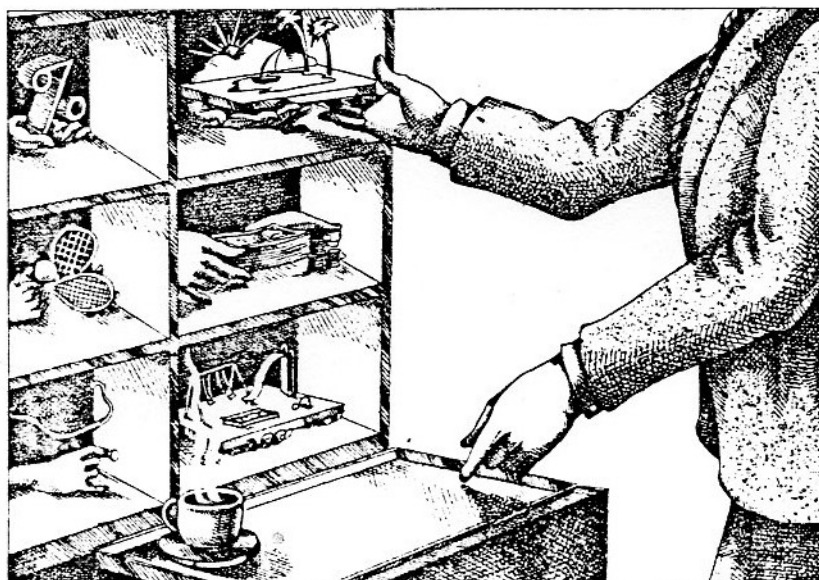|	

Texte:

A Varied Menu of Benefits

Companies are offering employees "cafeteria-style" choices

As the summer vacation season arrives, employees at Fluor Corp. (1982 revenues. $7.3 billion) face a tough decision. Do they want more money or more time off? Those working for the California-based construction firm can add unused holidays and sick leave to their vacations and take extra, paid time off. On the other hand, they can sell their vacations back to the company for cash and spend their summers on the shop floor or behind their desks.

Such choices are part of a growing corporate trend toward flexible, or "cafeteria-style," benefits. Instead of dispensing rigidly fixed programs to everyone on the payroll, some 100 major U.S. firms

since the benefits are not considered taxable income, the workers are not pushed into a higher tax bracket.

The new programs, in part, reflect the changing U.S. work force. Traditional benefit plans have been mainly geared to single-income homes in which husbands work and wives tend to the children. But a survey of Comerica's 5,200 employees, for example. showed that only about 13% were living in such once typical households. The 1980 census reported that 51.3% of U.S. women over the age of 16 had joined the labor force, compared with 37.7% in 1960. The number of families supported by one breadwinner, mean-

now offer or plan to offer expanded menus of alternatives. Employees whose working husbands or wives already have family medical insurance, for example, might prefer legal insurance or added vacation instead of more health coverage.

The options can be as varied and innovative as personnel departments can make them. At Detroit's Comerica Inc. (1982 assets: $7.4 billion), Michigan's second largest bank holding company, employees can tailor their benefit packages to help pay for child care. At Baker Packers, a unit of California-based Baker International (1982 revenues: $2.5 billion), workers can cash in up to a week of vacation and deposit the proceeds in company-sponsored savings plans that invest in stocks and other securities.

A main appeal of the flexible programs is tax savings. Employees who opt for child care or other services may receive them in place of higher salaries. But

while, dropped to 33% from 48.3% over the same period. Says Philip M. Alden Jr., a benefits specialist with the New York City consulting firm of Towers, Perrin, Forster & Crosby: "Benefits had to change with the times."

Workers, so far, seem pleased with the cafeteria-style plans. Says Gene Cincotta, director of compensation and benefits for electronics and defense operations of TRW (1982 sales: $5.1 billion): "The programs show that the company trusts its employees to make their own decisions, and that becomes part of the working climate." Last year a poll of the unit's employees found that some 96% of them said they were "moderately or very satisfied" with the firm's flexible benefits. The TRW program included extra life insurance at favorable rates and a wide range of medical and dental choices. Says Carol Schamp, a department manager: "It's a very good plan. I've found no problems selecting just the kind of benefits that I need."