Setting and Achieving Realistic Vocabulary Goals in a Communication English Course

Haidee Thomson
(Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand)
(Fuji Women’s University)

Abstract
This paper follows the creation of the vocabulary component of a communication English course in a university in Japan, showing how Nation’s (2000) course design process model and four strands framework (Nation, 2001) can be utilised to structure and evaluate a language course for effective vocabulary learning. Following the model, a needs analysis is conducted, making use of vocabulary size and level tests (Laufer & Nation, 1999; Nation & Beglar, 2007) to identify learner vocabulary knowledge and goals. Based on the principle that the more time you spend on a skill the better you will become at that skill, the four strands framework helps identify the various learning conditions and balance them across the curriculum. The four strands or learning conditions are: meaning focused input (MFI), meaning focused output (MFO), language focused learning (LFL) and fluency development (F). The planning process described in this paper can be used as an example or a starting point for those who
want to design structured, balanced and goal-focused communicative language courses.

Keywords: curriculum design, needs analysis, vocabulary testing, goal setting, vocabulary acquisition, course evaluation