Transcript: NCELP – Vocabulary TRG

Length of Talk: 32:20

Presenter: Dr. Robert Woore

# Slide 1 (1:34):

Hello everyone. Its Robert Woore again here. So in this presentation, we've got the slides from the original vocabulary TRG or Teacher Research Group, which we did at the beginning of the NCELP project and we're providing it again here for people who may have missed that presentation, or who are new to the project and so would like a bit of a catch up.

So, there's a counterpoint to this presentation, which looks at the research background, the underpinnings, the rationale for the NCELP approach to vocab teaching. That presentation also got a voiceover commentary, so please have a look at that first.

In this one we think about how to translate some of those research ideas and underpinnings into more concrete ideas for vocabulary teaching and we also explore some of the NCELP resources which are available to support vocab teaching.

I’ve done a voiceover commentary for some of the slides, which should start automatically as the slide comes on, and then, after the end of the commentary, you can stay on the slide as long as you like, and advance to the next one when ready. There are some hyperlinks to some of the specific resources which I’ll flag up. They should be clickable from the slide and should take you directly to the appropriate resource on the NCELP resource portal. So, I hope the presentation is useful.

# Slide 2 (0:32):

So on this slide we've got the aims of this session, which I won't read through, I'll just leave you to read through. But just to note- the first bullet point, the research evidence one, is in a separate presentation, so please have a look at that at this point. Just also to say there may be some slides without a voiceover commentary which you can read through at your own leisure and move on when ready.

# Slide 3 (2:25):

When we pull together the key messages from that research presentation we come up with the following overarching aim of vocabulary teaching. That is to help learners develop breadth, depth and fluency of vocabulary knowledge and we've looked at why all 3 of those dimensions of vocabulary knowledge are important. Then, with an emphasis on high frequency words, so we talked about the idea of getting more bang for your buck by emphasising high frequency words, and then including plenty of verbs. So we talked about the importance of a verb lexicon, to feed into the manipulation of language and meet the ability to create original language.

We’ve translated that into some specific bullet points.

Firstly, we think it’s important to select vocab carefully, and thinking about frequency should be a key part of that selection. Obviously, frequency isn’t the only criterion, because we have to think about GCSE syllabuses, and people's own interests and their contexts. But frequency we think should be part of those considerations when selecting vocab, and maybe something which has been neglected in some textbook based schemes of work hitherto.

Secondly, it's really important to revisit vocabulary, to get away from the idea that vocab might be covered once as part of a topic and then left to recede into the distant past and fade from learners' memories.

Thirdly we talked about the value of providing an L1 translation as an efficient and an errorless way of helping learners learn the meaning of new foreign language words. We talked about the importance of forcing regular recall of the form, meaning and production of the word.

Finally, point 4, to reiterate the importance of teaching the verb lexicon, and as part of that, the importance of linking what we've called the "long form", the infinitive, with what we've called the “short form”, the conjugated form of the verb.

# Slide 4 (1:22):

Here, you can find a quotation from the pedagogy review, which reiterates those points about the importance of frequency and the importance of developing learners’ verb lexicon. Where it says: “vocab to be taught should be informed by frequency of occurrence", this raises the question of, how do we know that and where do we get this information? Because many textbooks schemes of work to date may not necessarily have made that information explicit or apparent. So, one of the things we have tried to do in the NCELP vocabulary lists is to explicitly show the frequency of those words that we're teaching. We did that by going through some existing resources. There are some frequency dictionaries for the 3 languages: French, German and Spanish, which we've drawn upon, and if you click on the handout 1 there for category lists, rationales and uses, you'll find some information on how we went about selecting those resources. There's also some further information there on why word frequency is important, and how the NCELP vocab lists might be used in classroom practice.

# Slide 5 (0.51):

So, the NCELP resource developers have done a huge and impressive job of work in mapping the GCSE core vocab lists against that frequency information derived from the sources mentioned in handout 1. If you click on those boxes on the right, it should take you through to the relevant place on the NCELP resource portal, where you can find those lists for each language in a range of formats. The Excel format is particularly useful, because you can sort it by column. And then in the 3rd bullet point you can see a summary of some of the ways that that frequency data might be used in teaching. Those points are expanded on in handout 1 - the previous handout, as you will have seen, if you've already read through that.

# Slide 6 (1:48):

By way of illustration, there's a screenshot here of an extract from one of those lists - the Spanish one - here listed by topic. As a reminder, the way this works, is that the words are ranked by frequency of occurrence in the language, and so word no. 1 would be the most frequently occurring word in Spanish, according to the corpora used by this frequency dictionary by (Mark) Davies, which is the one we've used. The higher the number, the less frequent the word. It covers the 5000 most frequent words, so any words which are less frequent than that will be listed simply as >5000. I think it is immediately interesting to note that there are a number of words in the list which *are* listed as >5000, so which are actually pretty infrequent in the language, given that we've talked about the aim of trying to build up learners' knowledge of around 2000 words at least, and given that we've talked about the importance of frequency in the body of vocabulary knowledge. The lists are what they are, they are the specifications and we have to work with those, but we think nonetheless it's useful to be aware of this frequency information when thinking about preparing learners to use language beyond the classroom, because, by definition, the more frequent the words are, the more likely they are to be encountered in general language usage outside the classroom. In the longer term, NCELP is talking to the awarding bodies in the hope that in future specifications, frequency will be taken into account to a greater degree in the word lists that are used.

# Slide 7 (0.35):

There's another quotation here from the pedagogy review, which reiterates the importance of building pupils' verb lexicons. Please do have a quick read through of that, and please also have a look at handout 5 - so if you click in the box at the top of the screen there, it should take you to handout 5 on the NCELP resource portal. And there are some nice ideas in there for helping pupils to think about a verb lexicon, what verbs are, and why verbs are so important in learning a foreign language.

# Slide 8 (1:56):

To make all that more concrete, NCELP has provided resources for teaching the 25 highest frequency verbs in each language: French, German, and Spanish, and also 15 other high frequency concrete verbs, which we think will be particularly useful. For each verb, there are 6 slides for the initial introduction of that verb. Of course, many more encounters and much more practice will be needed thereafter, but these are the slides which we suggest for the initial presentation of those verbs to learners. The 6 slides include the long form, the infinitive, and the short form, in the 3rd person. We've chosen the 3rd person because we think that's particularly useful for learners, and it's also very frequency occurring, because it's used with he, she, and it, and singular nouns, and the impersonal '*man*' in German, '*on*' in French, or '*se*' in Spanish. Also, to date, we think there's often been an emphasis on 1st person, so we're trying to provide a bit of a counterweight to that, to ensure that the 3rd person form is taught. And of course it's particularly important that learners make that link between in the infinitive and the short form, so that they know, for example, that '*vouloir*' and '*veut*' have the same meaning. The slides have audio embedded in them, which we hope will be useful for teaching, if you want to use it. The following 19 slides give examples of those initial presentation slides, so there's 6 for French, 6 for German, 6 for Spanish. The next slide allows you to click for a language - to select a given language. When you've had a browse of those we'll resume this commentary from slide 28.

# Slides 9 – 27:

No audio.

# Slide 28 (0.42):

OK, so that brings us to the end of part 1 of the presentation, which is focussed on which words are taught, and we're going to move on now in part 2 to thinking about how to teach and learn vocabulary in a foreign language. So that's the bit shown by the green line. Just to note that point 2 there is greyed out, but in fact that's because of when this slide was created. There are now Schemes of Work available, and they're based around a very carefully sequenced introduction and revisiting of high frequency vocab, phonics knowledge and grammatical structures. OK, so here we go with part 2.

# Slide 29 (2:04):

This slide is just a reminder of the lesson observation and discussion sheet, which is for use by specialist teachers in the lead schools and teachers in the hub schools. You can find the original document by clicking on the box at the top-right hand corner, which will take you to the NCELP resource portal. This sheet is intended to provide a structured framework for lesson observations and feedback with a focus on teaching and learning vocabulary. We want to emphasize that we see this as a tool for professional development, for learning, a collaborative enterprise allowing teachers to provide each other with formative feedback and certainly not as part of any kind of formal evaluation or anything like that. On the back of the sheet, there is also space to record, at least in brief note form, any discussion that is had after the lesson between the teacher and the person who observed. That discussion is something that we would strongly encourage people to do, obviously time permitting, because we think that talking over the observed lesson with another experienced teacher will offer a really powerful opportunity for professional development and can hopefully be an enjoyable activity as well as a supportive and collegiate thing to do. So you can see on the first side of the sheet, there's a number of boxes to tick to encourage people to think about different approaches to vocabulary teaching, and there's also a blank box for comments and any thoughts that arise. We think it can be quite useful to have a sort of timeline very briefly in that box because it helps after the lesson, to recall what has gone on.

# Slide 30 (0:54):

On this slide, we've taken those statements from the lesson observation and discussion sheet and organised them into categories according to the different stages of vocabulary teaching and learning, which are the categories we came up with through the other presentation, the research presentation. We of course don't want to suggest that these categories are fixed and that this is rigid and prescriptive. Obviously, it's flexible - the stages will be overlapping. Many activities will be repeated for different purposes as learning goes on but hopefully this list at least gives a range of ideas and broadens perspectives on the different opportunities there are for learners to develop their vocabulary knowledge, and that applies both to inside the classroom and outside the classroom.

# Slide 31 (1:56):

What we did next in the TRG was provide people with some time just to browse various sequences of resources to showcase a range of ways of introducing new vocabulary, consolidating, developing and assessing it. It might be useful at this point to click where it says handout 11 and read through those teaching notes which talk through some aspects of those vocabulary learning sequences. Also, just at this point, we wanted to mention again the nature of the vocab lists which are built into the NCELP scheme of work. Those lists comprise words of different word classes. We talked about this in the research presentation but we do think there are some drawbacks to the more traditional lists which may be based around words of a single word class such as ten different nouns for sports or ten different nouns for pets. If you have a list of that kind, it might lend itself to a rather formulaic language use such as in a structure like "J'aime le basket", or "Je n'aime pas", and so really learners attention there is on the noun which changes each time and we think not enough on the rest of the sentence. In particular we are trying to draw learners’ attention to conjugated verbs and their relationship with the subject of the sentence. There's also some evidence that suggests that learners can find it more difficult to remember sets of words from a single word class if they try to learn them all at the same time. Finally, words from different word classes just provide more opportunities from the outset for pupils to manipulate language, to start to construct sentences and express meanings of their own.

# Slide 32 (0:57):

If you'd like to look at some sample learning sequences, go onto the NCELP resource portal, enter into the search box "Learning Sequence" and then a particular language you should come up with a range of different things to have a look. But, if you click on any of these, the top row there has one sample one for French, German and Spanish, so we would invite you at this point to just click on them, have a look through some of those sequences. There are notes underneath the slides to explain how they're intended to be used. I've also added links there to some sample self-assessment checklists for pupils to use which encourage them to test themselves and to think about different aspects of their knowledge and the vocabulary they've been encountering.

# Slide 33 (0:48):

So, hopefully you've now had a browse through some of the different resources available for developing pupils’ vocabulary knowledge. Because everyone will have looked at different resources through your own browsing, we've decided just to showcase a few of the developing vocabulary use tasks just to make sure that everyone has seen them. You can find all of these through the resource portal. The PowerPoint slides have notes underneath and some of them have accompanying handouts which make clear how they’re used. So I’m not going to spend ages talking through them all and explaining them in this presentation, it's just really to flag them up and make sure people are aware of them.

# Slide 34 (0:20):

So, here you've got a fairly classic information gap type activity and a spot-the-difference where pupils each have a different picture and have to describe it to their partner. It can be done in black and white or colour, which obviously opens up different opportunities for language use.

# Slide 35 (0:49):

On this slide and the next one, you’ve got a resource for practicing concrete verbs in German. So, each pupil, again working in pairs, has a slightly different picture prompt sheet and they have to describe what they’ve got. Taking it in turns, they have to work out what they have in common across the two sets of images. The numbers are there just to simplify the language production and really just to focus on the verb form, the conjugated verb form, the short form of the verb. Of course, the language could be extended and people could use the subjects to describe in more detail but, at a minimal level, pupils can say things like "Nummer eins schläft", "Nummer zwei trinkt" and so forth and so they're trying to find out what they've got in common across the two sets.

# Slide 36:

No audio.

# Slide 37 (0:22):

On this slide and the next one, you’ve got an example of a map task where again it's an information gap activity where one pupil has a route and the other just has the images. One has to describe the route they’ve taken around the map and try to get their partner to reproduce that route as accurately as they can.

# Slide 38:

No audio.

# Slide 39 (0:19):

I won't describe this one because the instructions are all written out on the left hand side there, but essentially it’s a bit like a “Guess Who” game but “Guess Where”, so pupils take it in turns to ask each other questions to try and work out which of a set of images they’ve got.

# Slide 40:

No audio.

# Slide 41 (1:11):

Finally, in this set of slides there is an example of a dictogloss activity. Here the table of words would be for the teacher’s benefit, not to be displayed to the pupils. What the pupils would do is hear the audio an appropriate number of times as the teacher would decide and as they're listening, they can make any notes they like. They could note French words they hear, they could make notes in English. Then after the listening, they can ask questions of the teacher, for example they might have heard the word "belle" and not be sure what it means, so they might ask "what does 'belle' mean?", "Comment dit-on 'belle' en anglais?". They might have heard the word "bilingue" but not be sure how to spell it so they might ask "Comment s'ecrit 'bilingue'?". Their task in pairs or small groups is to try to reconstruct as closely and as accurately as possible the exact text that they heard. Obviously then you can go through and give feedback on that. It presents some really interesting opportunities to feedback, to look at the errors they’ve made to see what they have and haven’t been able to hear, and also to think about strategies for listening in the future.

# Slide 42 (0:10):

On the next few slides, we've got a few more ideas for developing vocab knowledge starting with the idea of building pupils’ knowledge of word families.

# Slide 43 (1:02):

So, developing pupils’ knowledge of word families and of the relationships between words within a word family should support the flexibility of thinking which is conducive to success on the higher reading paper in GCSE. Bearing in mind that the exams will include forms of words that learners may not have met and which may not be on the prescribed vocab list, learners need to be able to spot the patterns and variations for the particular forms they do know and link these back to the meaning. So an example in here would be - do they recognise the stem-changed conjugated form 'muero' from the infinitive? If they don't know this word here, 'vejez', can they make a link to 'viejo' which perhaps they do know? That kind of thing.

# Slide 44 (0:12):

There are some examples here of authentic texts which may help learners to make links between different forms of words within the same word family.

# Slide 45 (1:04):

So ultimately, there are obviously many different ways of developing pupils' vocab knowledge and we would encourage pupils to be creative and to follow their own interest as well. So on this slide and the next few slides, there are some ideas for helping children to understand etymological links between the target language and English based on the shared history of the language and to see how those links can help us understand and use the language in the present day. You'll see that these slides also contain some wider reflection questions to hopefully get pupils thinking and to make links with their knowledge in other areas of their curriculum. Overall, it's useful perhaps to think back to that quotation from Norbert Schmitt (2008) which I’ll just read out. It says, "Overall, it seems that virtually anything that leads to more exposure, attention, manipulation, or time spent on lexical items adds to their learning".

# Slides 46-48:

No audio.

# Slide 49 (0:25):

Tying in with that previous slide, we think it's also useful for pupils to build up their understanding and their knowledge of the patterns and links between cognate forms in the target language and in English, and indeed with other languages that they know. On the next few slides are some ideas for how that might be done in practice.

# Slides 50-53:

No audio.

# Slide 54 (2:07):

Another way of developing and practicing vocab knowledge can be to use authentic, challenging, interesting, engaging texts, perhaps literary texts, and poems, like this one here. Obviously, it can take quite a long time to track down appropriate poems or bits of literature to use but luckily there are lots of sources out there such as the ALL literature wiki, for which there’s a link at the top-right of the screen which contains a number of suggestions. There are also various texts on the NCELP resource portal itself which you can have a look at. A lot of those have accompanying resources and ideas for teaching. If you click on the link in the box, it will take you to an area of the NCELP website with some information about using literary texts including a guide with lots of pedagogical suggestions. One idea for this poem which is really good as you can see for infinitive verbs might be to show pupils a blanked out version like on the left and ask them to predict which infinitives might be in here, what kind of things can a man with no head not do. Then they could get points if they have correctly predicted them or if they come up with unusual ones that no other team has got. You could read it through, reveal them, and let them see if they got any right and so forth. I think really with this kind of text, literary text and poems, it's a matter of being creative and enjoying it and letting that enthusiasm shine through to the pupils as well. After they've come up with some suggestions for infinitives, they could decide on what they think is their favourite version of this poem, including the original infinitives and their own, and they could perhaps practice it, they could perform it with mimes to the verbs, so there are endless possibilities limited only by our own imaginations.

# Slide 55 (0:57):

There's another suggestion here for a way that that previous poem could be exploited. I always think there's a lot of value in doing several tasks based on the same piece of literature or poem because as familiarity with it increases, pupils get more and more exposure to the language, and I think there can be a lot of value in that. In this activity, the idea is that pupils work in pairs and they each replace some of the infinitives with simple 3rd person forms, so rather than "no puede cantar", they change it to "no canta". Then they read out their version to their partner and their partner has to listen for if they have said the infinitive or the conjugated form. So, that's really good for distinguishing between, practicing producing, and recognising the short and the long forms of the verb.

# Slide 56 (0:29):

So, same idea here. Pupils would not see these slides but what they would do is; Partner A, for example if you look at no.5, would read out "no puede..." and leave a blank, and then Partner B would have to fill in what it would be: "no puede hablar" or "no puede habla". So again, this is a really good way of getting pupils to distinguish and produce these different forms of the verb. There's a similar example on the following slide.

# Slide 57:

No audio.

# Slide 58 (1:46):

We are currently working on developing assessments so that is work in progress, but I have already shown you earlier in the presentation these self-assessment checklists, which we think are really useful. I'll just talk that through. At the top of the sheet, you can see a rating system for different categories of word knowledge. If you remember in the research presentation, we talked about a continuum of vocabulary knowledge, so the bottom end of that scale is acknowledging that there is some knowledge there but far short of what’s the other of continuum which is using the word in a sentence. What students do here is they look at the Spanish word, or whatever the target language is, rate it 1-5, and give the English meaning if they can. You could also adapt this so that there were further columns with a fold over bit. For example, they could write out the English meaning, then fold the Spanish version away, and then try to write out the Spanish word again so that they try to produce it. Underneath, there’s space for them to try out writing sentences and that's useful in the sense that they can be as adventurous as they like, they can really show off or they can do something fairly minimal. It’s about trying to acknowledge this continuum of word knowledge and trying to reward the knowledge that pupils do have. There are also some examples there of possible translation sentences that could be used. If you click on the handout at the top there, that should take you through to the self-assessment checklist template so that you can use and adapt that yourself.

# Slide 59 (0:28):

In any class of learners, there will obviously be some who learn and progress more quickly, and some who take longer, so we just wanted to add a few reflections on different rates of learning. There will be more detailed guidance on this from NCELP but at this point we've just got a few initial suggestions relating to vocab learning which we invite you to read through and reflect on.

# Slide 60 (1:19):

Finally, we think there is a really valuable role for computer-assisted language learning as a compliment to what goes on in the classroom or indeed as part of what goes on in the classroom. Particularly thinking about what pupils can do outside the classroom before lesson, to pre-learn vocabulary, and so forth. There are many software platforms out there and what we’ve done here is produce a list of some of those platforms with some notes on them to help people make informed choices about which might be the best to use. So, if you click on where it says handout 13, that will take you through to the full version of that handout. This is just a screenshot of it. Where it says handout 14, there's also some ideas for setting speaking homeworks. So rather than homework always needing to be something which is written and handed in, actually perhaps it might possible sometimes to set homeworks where pupils speak, record themselves and pass the recording, the audio, to the teacher to listen to and assess or give feedback on. That can obviously be more efficient that trying to do individual speaking tasks in class where you can't possibly get around all of the learners and listen to them very easily.

# Slide 61 (0:29):

Okay, that brings us to the end of this TRG presentation, so I hope that's been useful. These are the points we said we'd cover and hopefully you feel we've ticked most of those off. The last one, "Understand the ways in which you will work with the Lead Schools to develop practice", there are some notes on that on the following slide. Thank you very much for listening and I hope that's been useful and please enjoy exploring and using the NCELP vocab teaching resources.