

Chapter 1: Introduction

Teaching adult EFL learners for five years in Japan and three years in Australia created numerous research interests for me both academically and as a TESOL professional. Two areas of specific interest – sociocultural influences in language learning and the effectiveness of coursebooks – have come together for me as a Masters student, and lead to an area of study of the interconnectedness of language teaching and learning, sociocultural aspect of language learning, coursebooks, and lexical acquisition.

For the purpose of this work, the term lexical acquisition is used to refer to an area of study in SLA (VanPatten & Lee 1990, Ellis 1994, Macaro 2003). The difference between how linguists define *learning* and *acquisition* (Richards, Platt & Weber 1985) is not debated. In this study acquisition refers to learners understanding new language items as a result of interaction with coursebooks.

Teaching from major-published, generic coursebooks (e.g. *Headway*, OUP, *Let's Communicate*, CUP; *Steamline*, OUP and *Cutting Edge*, Longman) it became noticeable that learners would at times display behaviour indicating that were experiencing difficulties understanding the direct relationship between a visual and a word or a visual and a context when visuals were not familiar. By "not familiar" it is implied that not all visuals represented recognisable concrete and abstract objects, contexts, ideas, etc. for Japanese learners. From objective classroom observations over a period of two years, I decided to view visuals in two categories: *familiar* and *foreign*. Working with these two categories, and in the absence of empirical studies, I tallied the number of familiar and foreign visuals in coursebooks. Out of nine coursebooks, 34 visuals were categorised familiar and 2318 visuals were categorised foreign. In other words 1.5% of the visuals were familiar (see Literature Review for raw data) - something which one would expect given the generic nature of these books, but something which posed a problem for the Japanese learners in my classroom.

From these observations and private collection of data, I became interested in visual material in coursebooks and the influences that visuals had on supporting learning.

Systemic Functional Linguist, S. Eggins (1994) writes about a continuum for plotting language learning tasks and target language features when considering the field, tenor, and mode in a given register. I first encountered this when learning about designing a course using

text-based syllabus design (cf. Feez 1998). Eggins (1994: 54-71) graphically demonstrated four continuums, which I have termed *learning continuums*, each ranging in broad terms from easy to hard because of the level of familiarity to a learner. Lander and Ochoa (cited in Feez 1998: 82) also formulated a continuum (register framework) which ranged from 'concrete', 'informal', 'personal', and 'context dependent' to 'abstract', 'formal', 'impersonal', 'academic', and 'context independent'.

The underpinning idea behind continuums is to plot language features to enhance learning. Eggins (1994) suggests that genre and register (field, tenor and mode) should be familiar to the learner as learners bring with them knowledge that supports further learning. Flynn (1996) too recognises that adult learners bring with them knowledge that affects subsequent language learning.

Eggins (1994) prompted me to once again bring visuals into question. Particularly, as visuals – at the level of expression – provide the context for the text and the lexicogrammar features. I thought that perhaps foreign visuals are further along the learning continuum than the target language for which the very purpose is to make comprehensible and that perhaps visuals familiar to learners would better align to making individual language features or context recognisable at the early stages of language learning continuum.

I became more and more concerned about the role of visuals in coursebooks for vocabulary learning - "vocabulary can be defined, roughly, as the words we teach in the foreign language" (Ur 1996, p. 60). Ur writes, in relation to visuals: "it is important for learners to have something to look at that is eye-catching and relevant to the task in hand" (p. 280). It can not be denied that visuals play a role in making coursebooks appeal and eye-catching. However, pedagogically I was more concerned about the role of visuals when presenting new vocabulary, the task in hand. In exploring different ways of presenting new vocabulary, Ur identifies illustration as a way of presenting the meaning (p. 63).

Ur also noted that having appropriate visual material available is a criterion for coursebook evaluation (p. 186). Reading this aroused me to develop my ideas about evaluating foreign and familiar visuals used in coursebooks for the purposes of vocabulary learning.

Purely by noticing as a TESOL teacher and having interests in language learning, culture, and coursebooks, which matured throughout studying the Masters in Applied Linguistics (TESOL), I arrived at a focus point for this dissertation.

This dissertation raises the question: do familiar visuals better contextualize the meaning of lexis than foreign visuals? The hypothesis is that familiar visuals better contextualize the meaning of vocabulary as foreign visuals are as foreign as the language items for which their very purpose is to make visually comprehensible. Consequently, the aim of this pilot study is to discover whether having visuals familiar to the cultural background making up the adult Japanese EFL learner's knowledge better contextualises English lexis and allows learners to acquire new lexical items purely using visual material. The objectives are to: (1) test whether the interpretation of the meaning of visually contextualised lexis is better when visuals are familiar to the cultural background of the learner compared to when foreign visuals are used to contextualise lexis; and (2) trial a pilot study to become more informed as to what would be required to conduct a large scale empirical study and to determine if there would appear to be grounds for such a study.

This work, adhering to the academic rigor of applied linguistics, is really more intended to have pedagogical relevance for TESOL teachers and coursebook developers. Should the findings indicate the hypothesis might be plausible and lead to further empirical study, this in turn would lead to more informed decision making when selecting visuals for the purpose of vocabulary learning with learners from different cultural backgrounds. This is an area that does not seem to have been of widespread study judging by the difficulty in finding previous studies done in this area.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Questioning the appropriateness of coursebook visuals for helping learners to understand new words may seem to be an area on which there would be much literature; however, this is not the case. A thorough search of online databases revealed an unanticipated lack of literature to support the hypothesis of this study. In order to conduct a literature review, it was necessary to show how studies and literature in other areas of applied linguistics related in part to this study and where gaps became present showing just cause for testing this hypothesis. Primary and secondary literature relating to coursebook evaluation, the pedagogic purpose of visuals, SLA, culture and language learning, acquisition of the lexicon, and TESOL pedagogy have been drawn upon for this review. This review explores, in order: (1) visuals and their role in making target language comprehensible; lexis, acquisition and contextualised language learning; (2) a definition of lexis; (3) culture, the lexicon and the difficulties of visually representing meaning; (4) visuals and coursebooks used in Japan; (5) the interconnectedness between visuals and lexical acquisition.

Visuals and their Role in Making Target Language Comprehensible

Mention of visuals and their role in language teaching and learning is predominately found in teacher training books (e.g. Ur 1996, Harmer 2001). For the purpose of this study, 'visuals' are defined as any visual stimulus including photos, illustrations, diagrams, graphs, and pictures. Relevant to this review, one identified role of visuals is to make vocabulary comprehensible as either a direct visual-word (1:1) correspondence or by providing the sociocultural context to reveal the meaning of the lexicogrammar items which isolated as target language (cf. Wright 1976, Rivers & Temoerley 1978, Celce-Murcia 1979, Willis 1981, Doff 1988, Daoud & Celce-Murcia 1979, Cunningsworth 1984, Harmer 2001, Tomlinson 2001, McDonough & Shaw 2003). Therefore, for the purpose of teaching language, it would seem relevant to question whether or not all visuals in generic coursebooks achieve this purpose for all learners from different cultural backgrounds.

To exemplify, it would be useful to consider the lexical item "festival". The accompanying visual would naturally be of a festival. However, festivals differ greatly around the world. The Japanese adult EFL learner does not have the same cultural knowledge make up as would say

a British EFL coursebook writer, for the purpose of highlighting an issue. If a picture of a regatta is used, it is unreasonable to presume that this language would be comprehensible to the Japanese adult EFL learner given that the visual is as foreign as the language for which it is meant to be making comprehensible. Perhaps if a visual of "tanabata" (the well known two stars festival in Japan) was used, the language would be more comprehensible as the visual is familiar to the cultural knowledge of the Japanese adult EFL learner.

It is largely accepted that new language should be made more comprehensible as a result of visual support. However, there is an absence of studies that examine whether or not visuals used in generic coursebooks do in fact assist in making new language comprehensible. It may be reasonable to presume that when visuals are as foreign as the new language, they do not make language comprehensible resulting in learners relying on dictionaries, bilingual texts, teacher translation, and other forms of language learning support. Consequently, visuals would in effect not be achieving this purpose and may only be included to make coursebooks visually appealing, another identified purpose (Wright 1976, Rivers & Temoerley 1978, Celce-Murcia 1979, Willis 1981, Doff 1988, Daoud & Celce-Murcia 1979, Cunningsworth 1984, Harmer 2001, Tomlinson 2001, McDonough & Shaw 2003).

A Definition of Lexis

The teaching and learning of lexicon is an area of widespread study in SLA (O'Malley & Chamot 1990, VanPatten & Lee 1990, Ellis 1994, Juffs 1996, Robinson 1996). What constitutes a lexical item has become more complex as understanding of the lexicon increases (Hodges 1984, Meara 1995, Critchley 1998, Hunt & Beglar 1998, Ketko 2000, Schmitt & Carter 2000, Moudraia 2001, Warning 2002). The following highlights what lexis is taken to mean and what the term means in this study.

A review of literature shows that the meaning of lexis is changing. Traditionally vocabulary was thought of as *individual words* (Schmitt & Carter 2000: para 1). This is also shown in the definition of Hunt and Beglar (1998) who view a word (a base word and a word family) as that which includes a base form (e.g. make) and its inflections and derivatives (e.g. makes, made, making, maker, and makers). They also include in the meaning of single word, words that include two or more words put together to represent a singular meaning – compound nouns, phrasal verbs and idioms. However, the idea of lexis meaning individual words is inadequate, according to Schmitt and Carter (2000: para 1) as "there are many units larger

than individual orthographic words”, which they refer to as “multi-word lexical units” (e.g. fish shop and burn the midnight oil). Further review of literature shows agreement with this.

Ketko (2000: para 2) article highlights in-depth the notion of “multiword chunks” (para 2). Multiword chunks are:

Words which semantically and/or syntactically form a meaningful and inseparable unit. They include collocations (e.g. alcoholic drink), polywords (e.g. by the way), idioms (e.g. take action), phrasal verbs (e.g. put off), fixed phrases with pragmatic functions (e.g. no kidding) (Ibid.).

Collocations, phrasal verbs and idioms were mentioned by Hunt and Beglar, but Ketko’s term *multiword chunks* is a good way of referring to a group of words – collocations, phrasal verbs and idioms (Hunt & Beglar 1998), also referred to by Schmitt and Carter (2000) as multi-word lexical units. Ketko’s terminology also adds the ideas of polywords and fixed phrases. And there are even thought to be longer lexical strings which should fit into a definition of lexis. Schmitt and Carter (2000: para 1) make reference to academics that have termed these lexical items: “lexical chunks” (Lewis, cited); “lexicalized sentence stems” (Pawley and Syder, cited); and “ready made complex units” (Cowie, cited).

For this study ‘lexis’ is defined as a singular word or group of words that may be either content or function words and represent a singular meaning. Lexis includes: nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and other singular words such as interjections and determiners; multiword chunks (collocations, phrasal verbs, idioms, polywords, and phrases); lexicalized sentence stems; and ready made complex units.

Culture, the Lexicon, and the Difficult of Visually Representing Meaning

Culture and language are interconnected - language is the words used by a tribe and through which culture is revealed (Penalosa 1981, Trudgill 1983, Wallerstein 1983, Edwards 1985, Montgomery 1986, McWilliam 1998, Ortiz, 2002). The lexicon is the collection of words used to represent the meaning of elements that make up one’s world (Hodges 1984). Hodges indicates that “words name common and fundamental concepts and situations of a culture, as well as subsets of words that result from one’s personal, social and occupational experiences” (1984, para 6). Hodges states that one’s language—words—shapes the way of interacting with and understanding the world.

Hodges is of direct relevance to this study because it is possible to presume as language teachers that learners do not share the same view of reality. Therefore visuals could be considered as being culturally familiar/universal or unfamiliar. The unfamiliar visuals could be considered foreign similar to foreign language, and for that reason, it is expected that cultural factors would impede on a learner's ability to understanding the meaning of words from foreign visuals.

Visuals and Coursebooks Used in Japan

Literature is available on coursebook evaluation (Daoud & Celce-Murcia 1979), Garinger 2001, Kitao & Kitao 1997), however visuals only get mention in regards to appeal and representing a correct representation of reality (e.g. the balance of male and female occupations, the same number of pictures from people from different cultures). The hypothesis presented in this study, based on reviewed literature, has evidently not been considered in coursebook evaluation. Therefore a minor analysis of the foreign and visual content of generic ELT coursebook visuals was conducted for this review to evaluate coursebooks (see Table 2.1)

Generic coursebook	Total No. of familiar visuals	Total No. of foreign visuals	% familiar
New Headway English Course (Soars & Soars 1998, 2000)	4	614	1.42
<i>Pre-Intermediate Student's Book</i>	1	356	0.28
<i>Upper-Intermediate Student's Book</i>	3	258	1.14
Inside Out (Kay & Jones 2000, 2002)	7	472	1.46
<i>Pre-Intermediate Student's Book</i>	6	239	2.44
<i>Intermediate Student's Book</i>	1	234	0.42
New Cutting Edge (Cunningham & Moor 2005a,b,c)	20	1019	1.92
<i>Elementary Student's Book</i>	11	421	2.54
<i>Pre-Intermediate Student's Book</i>	8	359	2.17
<i>Intermediate</i>	1	239	0.41
Activate Your English (Sinclair 1995; Sinclair & Prowse 1996)	3	213	1.38
<i>Pre-Intermediate Coursebook</i>	2	97	2.02
<i>Intermediate Coursebook</i>	1	116	0.85%
Total	34	2318	1.5%

Table 2.1: analysis of foreign and familiar visual content of generic coursebooks used in Japan

It was established that 1.5% of visuals would be familiar to adult Japanese ELT learners. Presenting this in other terms, only 1.5% of visuals from generic coursebooks would achieve the purpose of making new words comprehensible, if the hypothesis were plausible.

This analysis was low in validity as reliable descriptors were not available from an empirical resource for what constitutes foreign and familiar visuals. Therefore, if the visual did not

specifically relate to Japan, it was considered foreign. Some images that counted towards the total of 2352 foreign visuals included images that may be considered to be well known world wide in developed countries (e.g. visuals of movie stars, world wonders, famous historical people) or represent fundamental objects, places, knowledge, etc. (e.g. visuals of personal objects, airports, countries). Thus, the figure of 1.5% is not valid. Nonetheless, it is an assumption that even if careful criteria would have been developed to determine which visuals depicted western cultural knowledge and which determine Japanese cultural knowledge and which visuals are universal/general knowledge, the portion of visuals representing the meaning of the foreign language using images of situations, events, ideas, concepts, beliefs, genres, language events and so on familiar to adult EFL learners in Japan would still have been low.

This is to be expected given the generic nature of these coursebooks. Establishing grounds in this pilot study, for further testing of the hypothesis is therefore pedagogically relevant. In the absence of empirical studies, coursebook writers can not be certain that visuals achieve the purpose of making new language meaningful for all learners.

The Interconnectedness between Visuals and Lexical Acquisition

Lexical Acquisition

Teaching, learning and remembering vocabulary is of relevance to this review. Hulstijn (2003) wrote about vocabulary learning in SLA as being either “incidental” or “intentional” (pp. 362-69). Hulstijn reviewed 19 studies that inquired into the acquisition of target words and the role of input, either as a reading or listening (receptive), the characteristics of spoken and written context, and the presence of and absence of linguistic cues to reveal the meaning of words. Areas studied in unintentional learning included new word frequency, oral input, oral vs. written input, reading vs. writing, glossing and/or inferencing, and dictionary use.

There was one study by Lotto and DeGroot (1998) into the role of using pictures in intentional language learning that fits in well with this dissertation. Hulstijn writes in “studies of intentional L2 vocabulary learning” that the intentional learning paradigm involves learners learning verbal information in association with other verbal or non-verbal information (e.g. pictorial). Lotto and DeGroot studied the learning method – translation vs. the use of pictures – in productive recall of L2 target words and found that translation produced greater recall than did the use of pictures.

The conclusion drawn by Lotto and DeGroot is of relevance to testing the hypothesis of this study because their study did not take into account the variable of the cultural content of the visuals. It may have been that learners reverted to translation when visuals were unfamiliar and therefore not suitable for adding learners to understanding the meaning of new words pictorially.

Hulstijn (2003) after reviewing studies came to the following conclusion about lexical acquisition.

It is widely believed in the applied field of language pedagogy that most vocabulary, in L1 as well as L2, is acquired in an incidental fashion, as the by-product of reading and listening activated not explicitly geared to vocabulary learning. Furthermore, it is widely held that little vocabulary is acquired in an intentional fashion, through activities aimed at deliberately committing the lexical information to memory and keeping that information readily accessible (p. 362).

If this is the case, visuals are associated with reading and listening when using coursebooks so there would be grounds to test. Once again, if the visuals are as foreign as the language which they are intended to make comprehensible, how can one be assured that incidental learning is occurring? And this does not seem to have been an area of enquiry within the field.

Foreign Language Learning

This study is concerned with adult Japanese EFL learners. Therefore, it was interesting to read about foreign language learning in the realm of SLA. VanPatten and Lee (1990, p. 240) state it is important to make distinct foreign language learning (FLL). Even though FLL relates closely to SLA (Kramsch, Gass, Anderson, Eubank and Odlin, cited), VanPatten and Lee write that a distinction needs to be made when research is concerned with context in language learning.

Specifically, social context, those situations in which language is used, has an impact on quality and quantity of language interaction(s), be it in the realm of input that the learner is exposed to or the output of the learner himself or herself (Ibid.).

The contextualisation of target vocabulary through images to provide comprehensible input

can be connected to FLL. As such, a strong point made by VanPatten and Lee is relevant to this review. They found that it is important for input to be easily comprehensible and of high quality as this has a strong bearing on the extension, degree and quality of language acquisition in foreign language learning. Thus, it is reasonable that visuals relating to the L1 cultural knowledge of language situations/context could be used to represent the foreign language situations/contexts so as to perhaps increase the degree of language acquisition achievable. While many generic EFL coursebooks use universal images, these books also tend to conform to visuals representing the L1 cultural knowledge of coursebook writers from English speaking countries such as UK, USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

Of direct relevance to this study is a chapter by Kramsch concerned with foreign language research. Kramsch (1990: 31-32) highlights that FLL still needs to explore how learners acquire lexical meanings from taught lexical items and the ability of learners to decontextualise written texts and manipulate symbols in a variety of sociocultural contexts. A question posed by Kramsch relates to this study: How do textbooks help students make links between different aspects on knowledge, pass from one cultural framework to another, construct meanings, etc.? (p. 32).

Conclusion

To reiterate, a thorough search of online databases revealing a surprising lack of literature on visuals. One main identified purpose of visuals is to representing the meaning of new words as either a direct correspondence between a picture and a word or by contextualising the new vocabulary by providing a sociocultural context. As a result, there is a need to consider whether or not visuals achieve this purpose. It was shown that culture and language are interconnected and that one's view of the world is associated with one's culture, and for that reason, it is reasonable to presume that visuals may be culturally familiar or unfamiliar. A proportion of generic visuals in coursebooks would quite possibly not represent the meaning of new lexical items because the visuals are as foreign as the foreign language. It was shown in the literature that the more familiar the language items the more opportunity learners have to understand the new language – comprehensible input. Familiar visuals may provide more comprehensible input. The study on vocabulary learning using pictures vs. dictionaries by Lotto and DeGroot (1998) did not account for the variable of the cultural content of pictures and this may have been a reason why dictionary usage produced better results. Therefore, there are ground to test this.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Aim of Pilot Study

This study aims to establish whether the possibility exists that presenting culturally familiar rather than culturally foreign visuals¹ to adult EFL learners better contextualises² visually represented lexis resulting in learners being more able to correctly interpret the meaning of the newly encountered language feature without reliance on other TESOL teaching and/or EFL learning strategies as hypothesised.

Objectives

The objectives of this research are to:

1. Test whether the interpretation of the meaning of visually contextualised lexis is better when visuals are familiar to the cultural background of the learner compared to when foreign visuals are used to contextualise lexis.
2. Trial a pilot study to become more informed as to what would be required to conduct a large scale empirical study and to determine if there would appear to be grounds for such a study.

Participants

Two adult Japanese EFL learners of intermediate English proficiency volunteered for the pilot study. These learners were selected solely because of the investigator's keen interest in cultural considerations in language learning for Japanese learners. Both participants have completed university studies in their L1, were in an age range of 25 to 40, and had formally studied English in Japan for no less than six years. The study was limited to two participants due to the available of volunteers at the time. A replication of this pilot study or a more extensive experimental study need not be restricted to adult Japanese EFL learners.

Method

Qualitative Approach: Structured Interview

A qualitative approach in the form of a highly structured interview was chosen to check a participant's interpretation of the meaning of new vocabulary from visuals. An interview was chosen due to the small scale of the study.

Vocabulary Test 1 and 2

For the interview two vocabulary tests using visuals were developed. By having two tests, each with an equal proportion of foreign and familiar visuals, it was possible to discuss the findings of each test and to compare the results from each test in an attempt to increase the validity of the findings. Neither words nor visuals were duplicated across the tests.

Each test consisted of 10 lexical items with corresponding visuals (five foreign and five familiar). The foreign visuals were selected from *The New Cambridge English Course*, *New Cutting Edge* and *Headway*. The criterion for selecting the coursebooks was that they are used in Japan and written and produced by Western ELT experts anticipating that this would increase the likelihood of the usage of foreign visuals. The lack access to coursebook collections when developing the tests was a major factor in limiting the materials to the prior coursebooks. It is suggested that major ELT publishers (i.e. OUP, CUP, Longman, and Heinemann) be stakeholders in any further research. Selected non-copyright images on the Internet and images from the investigator's personal photos from Japan made up the familiar visual component. However, were there not the constraints of access to more coursebooks, these visuals would have come from ELT coursebooks in Japan which incorporate visuals familiar to Japanese learners (i.e. *Passport*, OUP; *Impact Series*, Longman).

Conducting the Interview and Administering the Tests

It was explained and demonstrated to the participants using an adjusted level of L2 that they would be given two tests during one hour. Each test consisted of 10 words each with a visual below that contextualising the word. They were made aware that they would have to attempt to understand to be the meaning of the word by only using the visual provided. They could not ask questions about the word nor use a L1-L2 dictionary. Response options to show understanding of the target words included translating, offering a synonym, providing a definition, or using the word during speech to demonstrate understanding. This was demonstrated using a model test item. They were told that if they already knew the word to say "known" and that should then move on to the next test item. They would only have to negotiate one test item at a time. They were told that the interviewer would be making notes during the interview. It was also explained to them that the purpose of the each test is to see if it is easier to interpret the meaning of new lexis when visuals are familiar or foreign. It was explained that the reason for two tests was to see the mean of the findings should the exams be at variance in difficulty.

During debriefing, participants were given the opportunity to make any comments about the design of the test, issues relating to familiar and foreign visuals, and trying to understand the meaning of new words from visuals, the study, and so on. Such comments were noted and are later discussed (e.g. the issue of a 1:1 correspondence between a visual and a word).

Data Collection Method

Each participant was asked to show what she understood the visually represented meaning of a lexical item to be by offering a synonym, making a sentence, explaining, giving a definition, offering a L2-L1 correspondent, or using the words in a spoken context. Vocabulary Test 1 and 2 were administered in sequence over 60 minutes. Objective and verbatim notes were made on the interview data collection sheets (see Appendix III for template) to record the raw data.

Criterion for Interpreting and Evaluating the Data

For this study, three categories – perfect, close and wrong – were used to mark the understanding of the meaning of visually contextualised vocabulary. Noted responses were assessed against the following criteria:

- *Perfect*. The participant's translation can be found to be correct in a bilingual electronic dictionary (the authoritative reference item for this study is the software *Shogakukan Progressive Japanese-English Dictionary 2002* on EX-word Dataplus 3 XD-SW6400), or the participant's synonym, explanation, definition or spoken use of the words is perfect in the author's professional judgment.
- *Close*. Although the participant's translation, synonym, explanation or definition is adequate, misunderstanding and/or miscommunication would occur in some instances especially when trying to use the item in place of a familiar synonym.
- *Wrong*. In the case of translation, there is no match or possible match found in a search of a bilingual electronic dictionary (the authoritative reference item for this study is the software *Shogakukan Progressive Japanese-English Dictionary 2002* on EX-word Dataplus 3 XD-SW6400) and any explanation, definition or spoken use of the word is clearly incorrect.

Results were tallied from both tests and compared to see how each participant scored in the

foreign visuals and culturally familiar visuals on the two tests and overall to see if a pattern of higher scores emerged (see Chap. 4, Fig. 4.1: Cross Analysis of Data). It was anticipated that at times there would exist more than one possible word-visual correlation, that is a single visual can fittingly represent several words. To illustrate, a picture of a president could also convey meanings such as person in charge, leader, dictator, power, and prime minister. Therefore, instances of this occurring are remarked about in the discussion (see Chap. 4, Data: Participant 2, Vocabulary Test 2, and Additional Comments).

ENDNOTES

- 1 The notion being presented incorporates the ideas of culture "the total set of beliefs, attitudes, customs, behaviour, social habits, etc. of the members of a particular society" (p.70) which extends into linguistic relativism "a belief which is held by some scholars that the way people view the world is determined wholly or partially by...their native language – Sapir-Whorf hypothesis" (p. 166) (see Richards, J.C., Platt, J. & Webber, H.1985, *Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics*, Essex: Longman). Mature learners have knowledge derived from learning about the world through their native language. Visuals which reflect this knowledge have been term *culturally familiar* and visuals which do not are termed *cultural foreign*. For example, for a Japanese learner a culturally familiar visual for "festival" is *hanami* (trans. flower viewing). A picture of Thanks Giving Day (USA) is culturally foreign.
- 2 Context is that which helps add meaning to a word, phrase etc. as indicated on pages 61 to 62 in Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics, written by Jack Richards, John Platt and Hedi Webber, published by Longman in 1985. Context includes the words and grammar that surrounds a particular word, phrase, etc. and the sociocultural context. "Contextualise" is used to refer to visuals that are purposefully utilised by coursebook writers to add meaning of a word, phrase, etc.

Chapter 4: Data, Analysis and Interpretation

Data: Participant 1

Vocabulary Test 1

In Vocabulary Test 1 (see Appendix I) the lexical items in visuals 1.1, 1.5, 1.6, and 1.10 were already known by the participant. This meant that only six visuals could be tested: visuals 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.7, 1.8, and 1.9.

Visual 1.2

The participant was silent for approximately three minutes whilst studying the image. The participant then exclaimed "don't rush". This response was marked perfect.

Visual 1.3

The participant commented "I don't know! I can't understand because people different". The participant's interpretations of the meaning were "What's going on?" and "think deeply". These responses were marked wrong.

Visual 1.4

The participant used an explanation to explain the meaning. The participant said, "I'm interested in something so I'll show someone it for example interested in conversation". This response was marked close.

Visual 1.7

The participant started with saying that it was a kind of weather, bad weather. Soon after though the participant said that it was a mistake as the participant misread the word as storm. The participant then went on to explain where the participant had seen this image before: "place near an ocean, little water very small between beach and cliff". This response was marked perfect.

Visual 1.8

The participant quickly said, "I can guess this word easily as I have been many times in

Japan". This response was marked perfect.

Visual 1.9

The participant responded by gesturing and explaining about going down a hill by a small plastic bucket (shape of sled and action gestured). This response was marked perfect.

Vocabulary Test 2

In Vocabulary Test 2 (see Appendix II) the lexical items in visuals 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.8, and 2.9 were already known by the participant. As a result, only three visuals could be tested: visuals 2.6, 2.7 and 2.10.

Visual 2.6

The participant explained the meaning as: "you should take a rest because you have a busy life. People need relaxing and doing nothing". As the participant could not determine the grammar of the word, the response was marked close.

Visual 2.7

The participant gave a definition: "describe someone or something's figure, state". This response was marked perfect.

Visual 2.10

The participant said that it was very easy to understand the meaning of this visual: "famous and popular so everyone knows this person, thing, object". This response was marked perfect.

Data: Participant 2

Vocabulary Test 1

In Vocabulary Test 1 (see Appendix I) the lexical items in visuals 1.1, 1.8 and 1.10 were already known by the participant. This meant that only seven visuals could be tested: visuals 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.7, and 1.9.

Visual 1.2

The participant offered the word "breakfast". This response was marked wrong.

Visual 1.3

The participant said, "Muzukashi no" (Trans. This is difficult). "I can't find the word. I have image 'genjitsu'" ah I have dream, I hope some dream, but now nothing". This response was marked close.

Visual 1.4

The participant responded by explaining that the meaning was clear, "she is interested to him". This response was marked perfect.

Visual 1.5

The participant explained the meaning of the picture. "I want to talk your thinking and I want you to understand me. If no title – catch ball" This response was marked wrong.

Visual 1.6

The participant said, "top of mountain". This response was marked perfect.

Visual 1.7

The participant said the Japanese word for stream "hyoga". This response was marked perfect.

Visual 1.9

The participant exclaimed within three seconds, "Yes, I understand – 'tsuberu'". This response was marked perfect.

Additional Comments

During the feedback phase of the interview, the participant wanted to make the point that the number of bubbles in the picture (Visual 1.5) was confusing because in Japanese culture the exchange would have been initiator and respondent - *Do you mind? No*. Therefore, the picture was just confusing, to quote. The response in relation to this visual was marked wrong.

Vocabulary Test 2

In Vocabulary Test 2 (see Appendix II) the lexical items in visuals 2.1, 2.2, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, and 2.9 were already known by the participant. However, the participant wished to comment about the impression of the meaning of visuals 2.1, 2.4 and 2.9. This meant that only four visuals could be tested: visuals 2.3, 2.7, 2.8, 2.10. Comments relating to visuals 2.1, 2.4 and 2.5 will

addressed under the heading of additional comments.

Visual 2.3

The participant immediately exclaimed in Japanese “kokuhou”. When asked to further explain, the participant said, “That country has very important thing like building, ‘kinkakuji’ (Lit. The Golden Temple in Kyoto)”. This response was marked perfect.

Visual 2.7

The participant said, “Yes, I understand – ‘tehaisho’”. This means wanted. This response was marked wrong.

Visual 2.8

The participant said that the word meant ‘kankyo’ (Lit. travel). The response was first thought to be close, but despite more prompting, the participant could not understand the image as representing anything else but travel. Therefore, this response was marked wrong.

Visual 2.10

The participant said that this word meant character. This response was marked perfect because the word animation was omitted by the learner for animation character is more closely related to the usage of the Japanese loanword.

Additional Comments

The participant on numerous occasions wished to make comments about the interpretation of meaning for known vocabulary items with culturally familiar visuals. For visual 2.1, the participant personally interpreted the visual as meaning custom, tradition, but not ceremony. “I know the word ceremony because we use it in Japan. If the title was not there, I would not think that this picture is ceremony. To me, ceremony is like ‘kekonshiki’ (Lit. wedding)”. For visual 2.4, in the absence of words, the participant’s interpretation would have been “morning rush”. For visual 2.9, the participant mentioned that the same word is used in Japan but is used in the context of a talking at a large meeting. If there was no title, the participant would have immediately thought that the visual meant “president” rather than ‘prime minister’.

Analysis and Interpretation

		Cross Analysis of Data					
Vocabulary Test 1 and 3		Participant 1			Participant 2		
		Interpretation of meaning			Interpretation of meaning		
Familiar Visuals	Foreign Visuals	Perfect	Close	Wrong	Perfect	Close	Wrong
	1.1	Known			Known		
	1.2	X					X
	1.3			X		X	
	1.4		X		X		
	1.5	Known					X
1.6		Known			X		
1.7		X			X		
1.8		X			Known		
1.9		X			X		
1.10		Known			Known		
2.1		Known			Known		
	2.2	Known			Known		
2.3		Known			X		
2.4		Known			Known		
	2.5	Known			Known		
	2.6		X		Known		
	2.7	X					X
	2.8	Known					X
2.9		Known			Known		
2.10		X			X		
Familiar visuals		4	0	0	5	0	0
Foreign visuals		2	2	1	1	1	4

Table 4.1: Cross Analysis of Data

Scores: Foreign Visuals

Participant 1 already knew five out of the 10 (50%) lexis contextualised by foreign visuals, two in Vocabulary Test 1 and three in Vocabulary Test 2. Out of the five new lexical items contextualised by foreign visuals – three in Vocabulary Test 1 and two in Vocabulary Test 2 – Participant 1 perfectly interpreted two lexical items (40%), closely interpreted two lexical items (40%) and wrongly interpreted 1 lexical item (20%).

Participant 2 knew four out of the 10 (40%) lexical items contextualised by foreign visuals, one in Vocabulary Test 1 and three in Vocabulary Test 2. Out of the six new lexical items contextualised by foreign visuals – four in Vocabulary Test 1 and two in Vocabulary Test 2 – Participant 2 perfectly interpreted one lexical item (17%), closely interpreted one lexical item (17%) and wrongly interpreted four lexical items (67%).

Scores: Familiar Visuals

Participant 1 knew six of the 10 (60%) lexical items contextualised by culturally familiar visuals, two in Vocabulary Test 1 and three in Vocabulary Test 2. Out of the four new lexical items contextualised by culturally familiar visuals – three in Vocabulary Test 1 and one in Vocabulary Test 2 – Participant 1 perfectly interpreted 100% of the meaning of the lexical items.

Participant 2 knew five out of the 10 (50%) lexical items contextualised by culturally familiar visuals, two in Vocabulary Test 1 and three in Vocabulary Test 2. Out of the five new lexical items contextualised by culturally familiar visuals – 3 in Vocabulary Test 1 and 2 in Vocabulary Test 2 – Participant 2 perfectly interpreted 100% of the meaning.

Scores: Emergent Pattern

In relation to foreign visuals, Participant 1 perfectly interpreted 40% of new words, closely interpreted 40% and wrongly interpreted 10%. Participant 2, in the same order, scored 17%, 17% and 67%. The combined scores, in the same order, were 27%, 27% and 45%. The emergent pattern indicates that 55% of the foreign test could be perfectly or closely interpreted whereas 45% of the test could not. This means that the learners (adult Japanese EFL learners of intermediate proficiency) understood the meaning of half of the target language presented using foreign visuals.

The outcome of using culturally familiar visuals was significantly different and somewhat more promising. The emergent pattern for interpreting the meaning of new lexis when visually contextualising the meaning using familiar visuals – visuals reflecting the culture, knowledge, reality, etc. known to adult Japanese – is interesting. Both participants perfectly interpreted 100% of the lexical items.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Summary and Conclusions

Summaries and conclusions will be made in reference to the two objectives of the pilot study introduced in Chapter 2 – Research Methodology. To reiterate, the first objective was to:

Test whether the interpretation of the meaning of visually contextualised lexis is better when visuals are familiar to the cultural background of the learner compared to when foreign visuals are used to contextualise lexis.

The second objective, consisting of two parts, was to:

Trial a pilot study to become more informed as to what would be required to conduct a large scale empirical study and to determine if there would appear to be grounds for such a study.

The First Objective

The findings from this pilot study demonstrate that interpretation of the meaning of visually contextualised lexis is enhanced when visuals are familiar to the cultural background of the learner compared to when foreign visuals are used to contextualise lexis making the hypothesis credible. The findings are neither dependable nor conclusive but are interesting. Participant 1 and Participant 2 perfectly interpreted 100% of the lexis. This result outscored the perfect and close results of using foreign visuals by: 20% (Participant 1), 66% (Participant 2); and 45% (combined). It appears that culturally familiar visuals better achieve the identified purpose of visuals (Wright 1976, Rivers & Temoerley 1978, Celce-Murcia 1979, Willis 1981, Doff 1988, Daoud & Celce-Murcia 1979, Cunningsworth 1984, Harmer 2001, Tomlinson 2001, McDonough & Shaw 2003) - making the meaning of new words clear as a direct 1:1 word-picture correspondence or by providing a context. In conclusion, the first objective was accomplished.

The Second Objective

Grounds for a Future Large Scale Empirical Study

There appears to be grounds for a future large scale empirical study. Moreover, should future empirical findings be similar, these would have widespread relevance in ELT coursebook development and TESOL pedagogy.

Requirements for Conducting a Future Large Scale Empirical Study

Throughout the development and implementation of this pilot study, issues have emerged revealing the complexity of the research and challenges involved in testing the hypothesis. Design issues for a future large-scale study include participant variables, selecting lexis, Japanese loanword cognates, culturally specific images, making a study significant to EFL in Japan, involving MEXT, involving ELT publishers, and future research methods. Issues are discussed under the broad terms: participant variables, developing future tests, and future research in Japan because this study is concerned with adult Japanese EFL learners.

Participant variables

Previous learning: proficiency and lexical knowledge

Participant 1 had previous knowledge of five out of 10 lexis (50%) visually contextualised using foreign visuals and six out of 10 lexis (60%) visually contextualised using culturally familiar visuals - 11 out of the 20 words (55%) collectively. Participant 2 had knowledge of four out of ten lexis (40%) visually contextualised using foreign visuals and five out of ten lexis (50%) visually contextualised using culturally familiar visuals – nine out of 20 lexis (45%) collectively. The combined score of both collective totals means that 53% of the vocabulary tests could not be used to collect data. A significant amount of opportunity to collect data was lost in the pilot study. To avoid this in a future large scale study, it would be necessary to have a means of determining, as much as possible, which lexis will be new to participants.

Interpretation of word- visual correspondence

To reiterate from Chapter 4, Participant 2 made comments about personal interpretation of the meaning of a picture in the absence of a vocabulary item. For visual 2.1, the participant would have personally interpreted the visual as meaning *custom*, and *tradition* in the absence of the word *ceremony*. It needs to be acknowledge that the Participant's comments are perfectly valid, and that a not always a 1:1 correspondence between lexical items and visuals. Therefore interpretation is a variable no matter whether or not a visual is familiar of foreign.



Verbs could be *practice*, *train* and *teach*. For visual 2.4, in the absence of words, the participant's interpretation would have been morning rush (= rush hour or peak hour).



Verbs could be *push*, *wait*, and *line up*. Nouns could be *platform*, *subway*, *public transport*, and *platform*. A multiword chunk might be *packed in like sardines*. For visual 2.9, the participant would have immediately thought the visual meant *prime minister* rather than *speech*.



Nouns could be *leader*, *government*, *political figure*, *election* and *public address*. Actions could be *deliver* (a speech), *address* (a nation), and *give* (a thank you speech). Adjectives could be *powerful*, *handsome*, and *elegant*. In a future study, attempts would need to be made to find widespread agreement on what lexis a culturally familiar visual best represents when

taking into account individual interpretation.

It is possible that individual interpretation was a variable that affected the results of the pilot study.

Developing future tests

Selecting lexis

For a future large scale empirical study, the correct selection of lexis in relation to learner level will be an important consideration. Some suggestions to elevate this variable would be to administer the tests in public high schools in Japan with 18 to 20 year old students who have not learnt EFL in the early childhood and childhood years in the national education system or at private schools. This way, it could be predicted which lexical items the learners would not know, taking into account the use of English loanwords in the Japanese language, and test these lexical items. Prescribed textbooks (cf. Templin 1997) from the *Koutougakkouyou Kyoukasho Mokuroku* (Mombusho-Approved Textbooks for Public High Schools 1997) prescribed by the *Mombusho* (Board of Education) could provide a corpus bank of headwords from which to select, and from the develop of a list, link it to lexis and visuals found in ELT coursebooks.

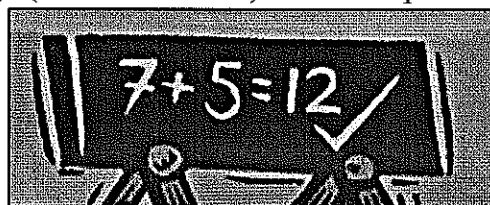
Japanese loanword cognates

Japanese loanword cognates reduced the number of words that could be tested in the pilot study. Daulton (1998) writes about the teaching of headwords in Japan and the portion of those words which are already in the Japanese loanword lexicon. He estimates that Japanese are already familiar with more than a third of the most useful words in the English language (para 1) in the headword count of 2,000. The total loanword lexicon is estimated to comprise of 20,000 words (Miura 1979: 7), in other terms, 10% of the Japanese language (Shibatani 1980: 153). "Loanwords have been transformed to various degrees and are different from the English basewords from which they are derived" (Daulton 1998: para 4) because of rephonalisation, truncation (shortening), speech part modification, and semantic modification (Ibid.). Both participants reported that they new the meaning of festival (Visual 1.10), ceremony (Visual 2.1) and speech (Visual 2.9) because these words are used in Japanese. Loanwords accounted for three out of 11 words (27%) already known to Participant 1 and three out of nine words (33%) for Participant 2. The combined total is six out of 21 words

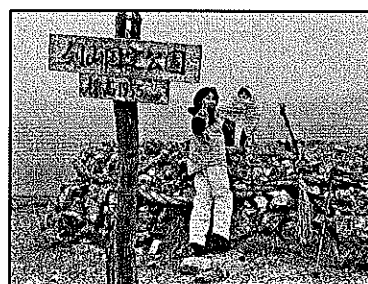
(28%). A future study would need to take loanwords into account to ensure that lexical items that are used in tests cannot be known because of their inclusion in the Japanese corpus.

Culturally specific visuals

Previously highlighted in the literature review, many visuals may be well known world wide in developed countries (e.g. visuals of movie stars, world wonders, famous historical people) or represent fundamental objects, places, knowledge, etc. (e.g. visuals of personal objects, airports, countries). In a future large scale empirical study, careful criteria would need to be developed in order to isolate visuals depicting 'western' cultural knowledge (foreign visuals), depicting Japanese cultural knowledge (culturally familiar visuals) and those depicting universal/general knowledge (universal visuals). The examples below illustrate this point.



The check mark is foreign for Japanese in this context of this equation as the check mark means that the solution needs to be double checked as something is wrong. The symbol 'O' is familiar. Therefore, this is a foreign visual as it does not contextualise the lexis 'right'. The visual was deemed 'foreign' because the symbolic representation carries a different meaning in the Japanese context.



The lexis represented in this picture is *peak*. It is culturally familiar for Japanese that a carved wooden sign with Japanese and/or Chinese characters is found on the very top of a mountain. The came with the rope weaved from rice-straw also indicates that this is the top of the mountain.

By having criteria that categorise visuals as either foreign or familiar, this variable could be controlled. Universal visuals would not be included in a future study.

Future research in Japan

Participants: sample size

In order to conduct a large scale empirical study, it would be necessary to have a large number of participants to increase the validity of the findings. To achieve this, it would be necessary to conduct the research in Japan by administering it to adult Japanese EFL learners at private and public high schools, colleges, universities, and language schools. The testing instruments would have to be adjusted accordingly to account for learner profiles.

Testing using ELT coursebooks: involving ELT publishers

This study made reference to coursebooks in various areas. These coursebooks can be categorised according to whether they are published by major international ELT publishers or Japanese publishers. Major international ELT publishers include Pearson's Education, MacMillan, Cambridge University Press, and Oxford University Press. Japanese ELT publishers (Templin 1997) include Zoshindo, Kyoiku Shuppan, Kiri-hara Shoten, Bun-eido, Kenkyusha, Sanyusha, Keirinkan, Sunseido, Kairyudo, Daiichi Gakushusha, Hitotsubashi Shuppan, Tokyo Shoseki, Obunsha, and Shuban Shuppan. Those listed make serve as an example of key stakeholders. Coursebooks from the publishers above are used widely in Japan. Sales from Japanese publishers in 1997 alone amounted to 824,000 coursebooks. Interchange, a popular series from Cambridge University Press, sales equate to 3 million coursebooks since first publication (*pers.com*: CUP, Tokyo). Therefore, any future study might benefit from inviting the involvement of those responsible for developing coursebooks as this is how the benefits of research would reach teachers and learners and be of pedagogical relevance.

It is presumable that collaboration between researchers and publishers would be mutually beneficial and would result in more informed development of ELT coursebooks for Japan which in turn would be favorable for adult Japanese EFL learners. Findings would inform publishers about the effect of the visuals they use in relation to lexical acquisition. Should an empirical study conclude that visuals which are culturally familiar result in more effect lexical acquisition, publishers could make adaptations to current coursebooks and add the innovation to future publications to ensure that the teaching and learning of lexical items through coursebooks is more effective in Japan and for adult Japanese EFL learners.

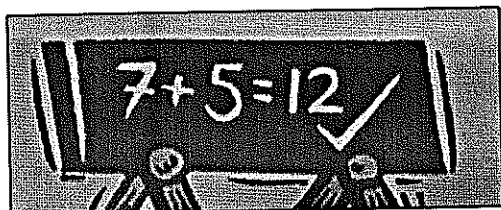
Conclusion

Overall, this pilot study achieved what it set out to achieve as a dissertation for a Masters degree and showed grounds for further refinement and study. Findings as a pilot study revealed, to some extent, that learners could understand more new lexical items when visuals were culturally familiar rather than foreign from generic coursebooks. Unforeseen variables affected the significance of the findings, but the finding nonetheless showed a significantly higher comprehension of new lexical items when visuals are familiar warranting grounds for further study.

Reflecting on this study, the test instruments need to be refined and participants more carefully screened. Strict criteria need to be developed for determining what constitutes a foreign and familiar visual. A far large sample size is needed to increase the significance of any findings. This study could also benefit from the inclusion of stakeholders and having the research performed at a much higher empirical level. The hypothesis is pedagogically relevant, and as a starting point, this pilot study provided a rough starting point for the study of the cultural content of generic coursebook visuals and the affect that such visuals have on learning new lexical items.

Appendix I: Vocabulary Test 1

1.1 right



(Adopted from the vocabulary exercise in Soars 1993: 15)

1.2 take your time



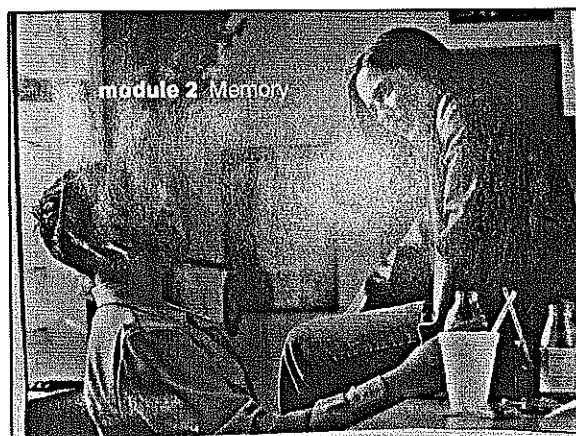
(Adopted from the expressions exercise in Swan & Walter 1990: 110)

1.3 got what it takes



(Adopted from the language presentation section in Cunningham & Moor 2005: 49)

1.4 showing interest



(Adopted from the language presentation in Cunningham & Moor 2002: 24)

1.5 Do you mind if...?

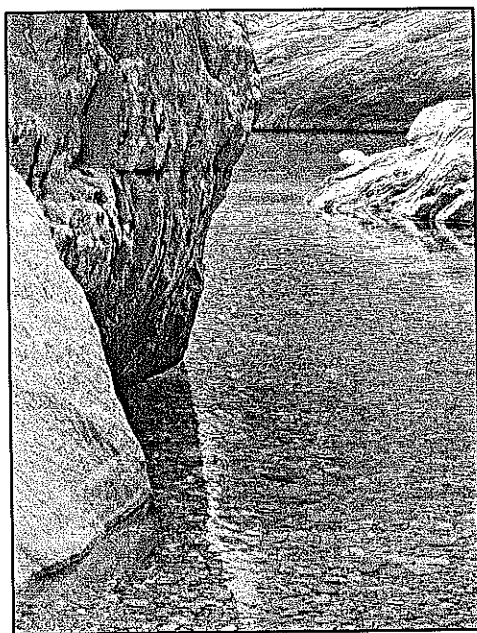


(Adopted from the language presentation in Swan & Walter 1990: Unit 19)

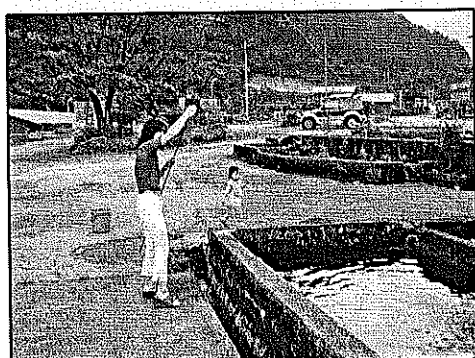
1.6 peak



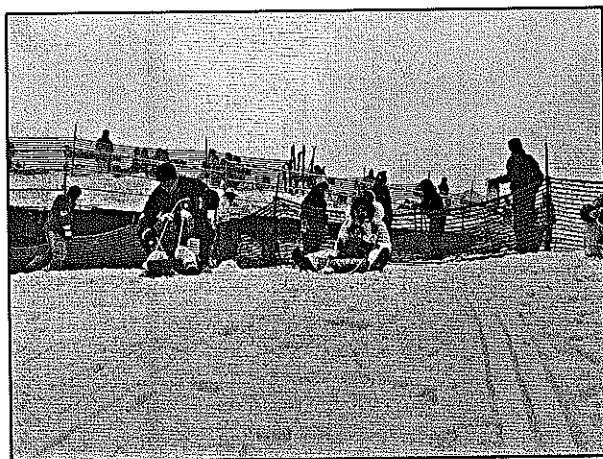
1.7 stream



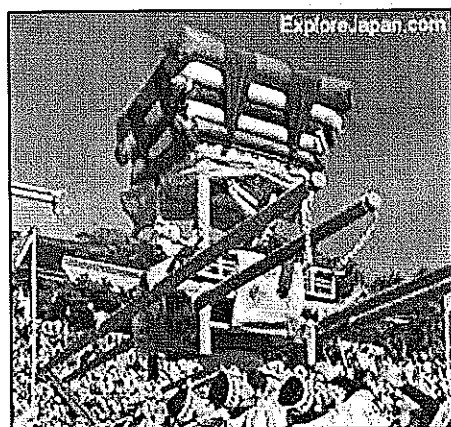
1.8 fish farm



1.9 sledding



1.10 festival

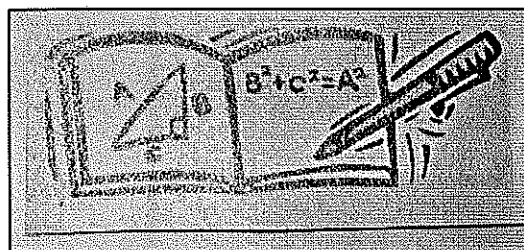


Appendix II: Vocabulary Test 2

2.1 ceremony



2.2 difficult



(Adopted from the vocabulary exercise in Soars 1993: 15)

2.3 national treasure



2.4 crowded



2.5 Please hurry...



(Adopted from the expressions exercise in Swan & Walter 1990: 110)

2.6. relaxing and doing nothing



(Adopted from the phrase matching exercise in Cunningham & Moor 2002: 8)

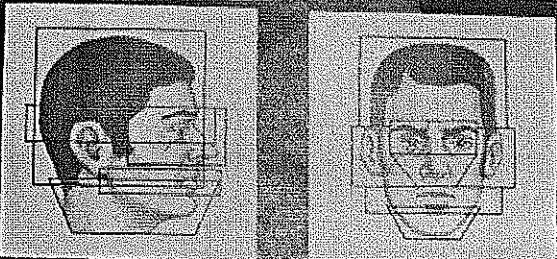
2.7 description

WANTED

FOR MURDER

PETER ROLAND ANDERSON

Aliases: PETER ROLAND, ANDREW ROWLANDS, ANDY PETERS.

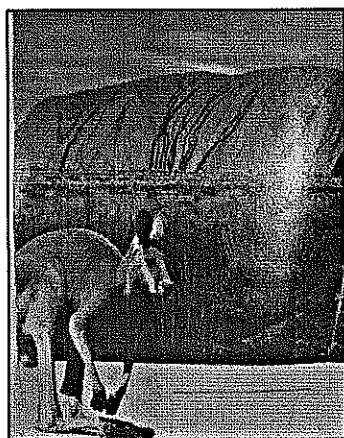


DESCRIPTION
 Age: 30, but looks younger
 Height: 6'2" (1m 90)
 Weight: 175 pounds (80kg)
 Build: medium
 Hair: black
 Eyes: blue
 Complexion: pale;
 scar under right eye
 prominent nose
 Nationality: British
 Occupation: mechanic

WARNING
 This man is armed and dangerous. If you see him, do not approach him, but contact the nearest police station immediately.

(Adopted from the dialogue in Soars 1991: 60)

2.8 ...worth seeing

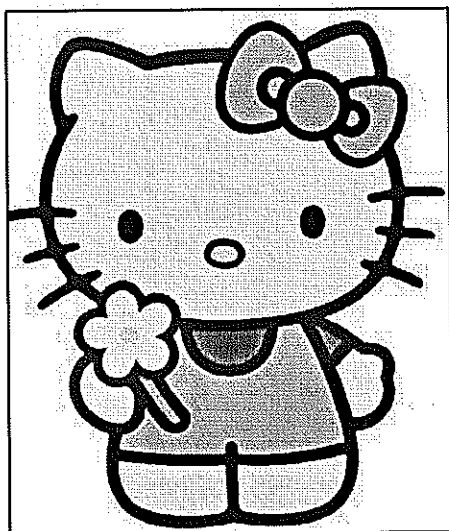


(Adopted from the communicative task in Cunningham & Moor 2002: 33)

2.9 speech



2.10 big name



Appendix III: Interview Recording Sheet

Interview Recording Sheet				
Investigator's reference				
Participant:		A B (circle)		
Test Sheet:		1 2 (circle)		
Strategy to show understanding		Interpretation of meaning		
<i>Visual</i>	<i>Noted response</i>	<i>Perfect</i>	<i>Close</i>	<i>Wrong</i>
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				

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