



Teaching / Teacher 1 Vocabulary Lesson

Hello, this is AJ Hoge. I am the director of Effortless English and I am doing this week's lesson. This conversation was a conversation between Kristin and I about language teaching. We talked about some of our language teaching experiences in the past and, and also now and some of our ideas about language teaching and language learning.

So let's get started on the vocabulary lesson. Here we go.

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At the beginning I say, "Hello?" And Kristin says, "Hey, AJ, whatcha doin'?"

Whatcha doin' means, what are you doing? What are you doing? But in normal speech, fast speech, we often say whatcha doin'?. Whatcha doin' just means, what are you doing?

And I say, "Oh, not much..."

Right, I'm not doing much or you could say nothing. Or nothing much. Or if you're busy you could say well, actually I'm very busy. So it's a common greeting. Whatcha doin'? What are you doing?

Alright, and I say, "Oh, not much, I'm just workin' on a blog post."

Of course a blog is a personal website. I was writing an article for my personal website. And I was writing an article about our teaching method, about the Effortless English system. I write a lot of articles about that.

Okay and then Kristin says, "What are you writing, exactly?"

So she's curious. She wants to know.

And I say, "Um, I just kind of wanna... I don't know. I wanna cover a few things."

Of course um, um um um, no meaning at all, it's a filler. We say um when we're thinking about something usually. And wanna means want to. I just kind of want to. Or I kind of wanna. I want to cover a few things. Here, to cover means to talk about or to discuss. So I want to discuss a few things. I want to mention a few things. I want to cover a few things. So it kind of means talk about or discuss, something like that.

And I say, "The main idea to get across..."

Here, to get across, to get something across... In this situation it means to communicate. Like I say, "I want to get my idea across. Or I want to get across my idea." That means I want to communicate my idea. So, to get across sometimes means to communicate.



Teaching / Teacher 1 Vocabulary Lesson

So I want to get across, I want to communicate “information about Stephen Krashen’s input hypothesis.”

Stephen Krashen is a very famous expert in language teaching, language learning research. Dr. Stephen Krashen. He’s probably the top expert, the number one expert in the world on the topic of language learning and language teaching. So I want to talk about his input hypothesis. Input means coming in, information coming in, for example, listening and reading. Listening and reading are input, right. The English is coming in. Speaking and writing are output, right. The English is going out of you. And hypothesis is a theory, theory or an idea, a scientific idea, scientific theory. So he has an input hypothesis, an input theory. And it means his theory is that language is best learned from input, lots of input. Lots of listening, listening, listening. Lots of reading, reading, reading. You do not learn languages from output. You don’t learn a language by speaking it and you don’t learn a language by writing it. You learn from listening and reading. That’s his theory, his hypothesis. There’s a lot of research about it. It’s actually much stronger than a hypothesis now, probably more of a principle or a rule. So anyway, that’s the idea I wanted to talk about in my article. I was telling Kristin about this.

And Kristin says, “Right, right.” And then I say, “Y’know, that’s the, the biggest principle.”

The biggest principle is input. Input, input, input. Listening and reading are the most important activities. That’s the foundation of our teaching method. It’s the foundation of the Effortless English system. The foundation means the central idea or the most important point or the core, right. It’s what’s at the bottom. The foundation is something that’s at the bottom, the bottom. And then you build on top of a foundation. So at the bottom of our teaching method is the input idea, right. That’s the most basic idea, that input is important. And then we have more techniques and more methods, but that’s the basic one. The most important one.

Okay, and then I continue talking and I say, “I think most schools, most teachers of English have an assumption. Their assumption is that speech and writing and error correction are effective ways to teach. That’s an assumption.”

An assumption is a belief. It’s a belief with no evidence. It’s a belief with no experience. So, you believe something but you have no reason to believe it. That’s an assumption. So it’s kind of like an unsupported belief. A belief with no support. A belief with no reason or evidence. So most schools have this assumption, this belief that you must correct students’ errors and you must make them speak, speak, speak, speak a lot. And you must make them write, write, write. And you must make them study grammar, study grammar. These are assumptions. There’s no support for these. These in fact are wrong beliefs.

Okay and then Kristin, she talks about our teaching experience in the past. She says, “Yeah, it was a



Teaching / Teacher 1 Vocabulary Lesson

great learning experience when we were getting our Masters degree. When we were learning and living in Bangkok, Thailand and going to AUA and learning with their listen first approach.”

So Kristin and I lived in Bangkok, Thailand and we were doing research there. We were studying there getting Master’s degrees there and teaching English, part of our research. And we did research at a school called AUA. So AUA is the name of a language school in Bangkok, Thailand. They teach the Thai language. And AUA uses a listen first method. It means the students only listen to Thai for one year actually, one year. They only listen. They don’t speak Thai at all. They don’t... No speaking, they have a very tough rule, strict rule. No speaking Thai for one year. It’s a listen only approach in fact.

And then I say, “Yeah y’know, of course, Dr. Brown started that program because of Krashen’s research.”

Dr. J. Marvin Brown, J. Marvin Brown was his name. He started the famous AUA program because of Dr. Krashen’s research.

And I say, “Y’know they don’t let you speak at all. The idea of just listening for a whole year without attempting to speak at all. No speaking for one year.” And I say, “They’re really hardcore. AUA is really hardcore.”

Hardcore means super strict. Super tough about an idea or super tough about a rule. For example: There is this idea, listen first. It’s an idea. You should first listen a lot to English or to a language. Well AUA is hardcore about listen first. They say listen only. They are very, very tough about this idea. No speaking, never speaking for one entire year. That’s hardcore. It’s very, very tough about this rule.

Okay then, then Kristin says, “Yep.”

Yep means yes or yeah.

And then the next paragraph I talk about another method called TPRS or TPR storytelling.

This is another interesting teaching method using stories to teach language. We use a lot of this method in our mini-stories, for example. Our mini-stories use the TPRS technique.

And in the next paragraph Kristin talks, she says, “Yeah, you know in all honesty...”

Means truthfully.

“when I had been teaching before the masters degree program, I felt like my methods were all over the place.”



Teaching / Teacher 1 Vocabulary Lesson

Kristin is talking about her past. That when she first started teaching English, her methods were all over the place in the beginning. All over the place means there was, there was no plan. It means lots of different kinds of things. She would teach some grammar, she would teach some textbooks, she would teach some speaking, some writing. Lots of different kinds of things, all very different. So she said, "My methods were all over the place." Means my methods were all very different and unorganized. Her methods were very different and unorganized. No plan, no structure. All over the place means no structure, had no structure.

She said, "But then when she learned these new methods during her masters degree program, it was like a breath of fresh air."

That's a great idiom. Like a breath of fresh air means refreshing. Refreshing, right, it means ahhh. It gives you energy. It gives you some new wonderful feeling. So for example, I say I was tired then I drank some water. It was like a breath of fresh air. Alright, it means the water was very refreshing. The water gave me energy. So if something is like a breath of fresh air if it makes you feel better, if it makes you feel refreshed.

Okay, then she says, "So the new methods were like a breath of fresh air."

The new methods gave her energy. The new methods made her feel good.

And then she said "I was able to start piecing together methodologies and techniques."

To piece together something means put together. So after her masters degree she understood. She knew how to teach. So then she could choose good methods. She could put good methods together. She used one technique and then another good technique, put them together in an organized plan for teaching. Piece them together. So piece together means put together.

She said, "The new techniques really seemed to click with me."

The techniques clicked with me. To click with me means to fit me. So to be appropriate for me, to fit me, to be good for me. Alright, so you can say ah, wow, you know, he really clicks with me, talking about another person. He clicks with me. It means we understand each other. We fit each other well. You can use it negatively. She doesn't click with me. Alright, it means she doesn't fit with me. Maybe we argue a lot. Maybe we don't understand each other, right. We don't fit each other. So to click with means to fit together well.

Okay, and then in the next paragraph I agree. I say, "Oh I was the same in the beginning."

A long time ago.



Teaching / Teacher 1 Vocabulary Lesson

“My methods were scattershot.”

Scattershot. Scattershot is similar to all over the place. They're very close. Scattershot means totally unorganized. Scattershot means without structure. Now my methods in the beginning also not organized, no structure.

Okay, and Kristin says, “Right.” And then I say, “Schools and most textbooks just throw together a bunch of stuff.”

Okay again, to throw together means to put together. Most textbooks put together a lot of different activities but they're not really organized. There's no reason. It's kind of random, right. They just put them together, some grammar, some listening, some reading, no real plan that's, that's very good.

Okay, and then we talk and Kristin says, “Yeah.” And I'm saying y'know, “These teachers, these schools they think this looks good. So they add it to their school or add it to their book. But there's no research.”

No research supports what they do. There's no research to show that it's effective. There's no research to show that it's successful. They're just doing it, but there's no research to support it.

And I say, “Now I'm embarrassed to think about the past.”

I think about my early teaching. My first year, my second year, was really bad because I was the same as these other teachers. I was the same as these other schools.

And Kristin says, “Yes, I agree. But now we're taking a listen first approach with these new lessons.” And she's happy about that. And I, and I agree again “Yeah, yeah...” Then using the listen and answer storytelling method is very powerful.”

Which it is, so I agree again. We're excited about our teaching method because it works. Because there's a lot of research to support it.

And then Kristin says, “Uh-huh, uh-huh.” And I said it was amazing, it was motivating for me to see my students improve.”

So using the new methods I was very excited, very motivated.

And Kristin says, “Yep, yep, that's great.” And she says, “And obviously it's kind of a no-brainer to continue on that path.”



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Teaching / Teacher 1 Vocabulary Lesson

So she says it's a no-brainer to continue using the Effortless English methods. A no-brainer is something that is obvious, right. It means you don't need to think about it. You don't need to use your brain. It's so obvious, so simple, you don't need to think. So, it's a no-brainer to use this method means it's so simple and obvious why we should use this method. A no-brainer... Something that is very, very obvious.

Alright and then we're kind of continuing down a couple more paragraphs I say, "It's amazing." Kristin says, "Right, well I gotta get going. I just wanted to call and see what you were up to."

I gotta get going means I need to leave. Okay, I gotta get going means I must leave. And then she said I just wanted to call and see what you were up to. Okay, what you were up to means what you were doing. To be up to something means to do something. Alright so, to be up to means to do.

Okay, and then we say goodbye. "Goodbye." "Okay, goodbye."

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And that is the end of the vocabulary lesson. See you for the mini-story.