



A Trial Study of Context-Rich NGSL Word Cards for Lower-proficiency Learners

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Abstract

Retrieval-based learning using word cards promotes durable vocabulary retention, yet few studies have explored how localized, bilingual materials can enhance engagement among lower-proficiency EFL learners. This trial study aimed to design and evaluate contextualized NGSL-based vocabulary cards for Japanese university students with limited English proficiency. A total of 437 bilingual cards, comprising 302 unique headwords (words), including 105 polysemous ones, from the first 700 headwords of the New General Service List (Browne, et al., 2013), were collaboratively developed to facilitate retrieval practice and strengthen form–meaning connections (Nation, 2013). Each card included familiar examples drawn from daily life and popular culture to sustain motivation and deepen processing. The materials were trialed with 19 first-year students; those who attended multiple training sessions demonstrated improved recall on the end-of-quarter NGSL test, and observations suggested greater engagement during study sessions. The design framework, along with a shareable subset, offers a replicable model for integrating retrieval practice and cultural relevance into vocabulary instruction in similar EFL contexts.

Keywords: word cards, contextualized examples, vocabulary testing, NGSL, low-proficiency learners

Introduction

Vocabulary knowledge is a central predictor of L2 reading (Nation, 2006; Zhang & Zhang, 2020). However, despite its importance, many learners in Japan show substantial variation in their knowledge of high-frequency words. Beyond the initial 1,500 words typically assumed to be learned in junior high school, Japanese learners diverge widely both in their core vocabulary coverage (Wadden et al., 2018) and in the depth and stability of their knowledge of high-frequency words (Kitano & Chiba, 2020). In such contexts, deliberate vocabulary development becomes a key pedagogical priority. The present article reports on the design and trial of a set of context-rich NGSL-based vocabulary word cards developed to support lower-proficiency Japanese university EFL learners. Specifically, the article first describes the principles and processes involved in selecting target words and creating the materials, then reports descriptive outcomes from a small-scale trial with a subset of students identified as most in need of targeted lexical support.

At Shōzan University (a pseudonym), mastery of the New General Service List (NGSL; Browne et al., 2013) in Year 1 is a core instructional goal, while improvement on the Test of English for International Communication–Listening & Reading (TOEIC L&R) is monitored as part of university-wide accountability measures rather than as a direct pedagogical target. Institutional data show that students typically gain 110–185 points on the TOEIC L&R, depending on department; however, differences persist between learners at different vocabulary levels, especially in Reading ($\eta_p^2 = .31$) (Richard, 2025). As shown in Table 1, the Reading-score gap between the lowest and highest vocabulary groups widened from about 80 points in April to 108 points by the end of Year 1, when NGSL mastery is expected to be achieved, and remained stable over the following year. This pattern might suggest that insufficient form–meaning recall of high-frequency vocabulary limited later reading growth, highlighting the need for targeted NGSL support for lower-proficiency learners.

To address this gap, an in-house vocabulary project was launched in 2025 to develop a set of high-frequency English word cards based on a subset of the first 700 items of the NGSL. The cards were designed to strengthen learners' knowledge of core lexical items through retrieval practice and contextualized bilingual examples. The project also emphasized enjoyment, relevance, and autonomy by incorporating materials that engaged learners through familiar settings, humor, and local cultural content. This article reports on the project's design, implementation, initial outcomes, and future directions.

Table 1 *Mean TOEIC Reading Scores by Final Year-1 NGSL Bands (2023 Cohort)*

Band (Frequency Range)	<i>N</i>	2023 Apr (Y1)	2024 Jan (Y1)	2025 Jan (Y2)	Δ (Y1 Apr → Y2 Jan)
1–3 (1–1900)	43	132	156	205	73
4 (1901–2400)	44	177	217	246	69
5+ (2401–2801+NAWL)	77	212	264	313	101

Note. Data from the GM faculty ($N = 164$) are shown for institutional context (Richard, 2025). The trial study described below included 19 students from two faculties. Group labels (i.e., 1–3, 4, 5+) reflect students' highest NGSL level at the end of Year 1, based on the April level check and subsequent end-of-quarter tests.

Literature Review

Within Japanese university contexts, where TOEIC L&R performance frequently serves as a practical benchmark for program evaluation, enhancing students' lexical knowledge is critical to improving reading comprehension. At the same time, recent research has clarified that not all aspects of vocabulary knowledge contribute equally to reading ability. Earlier work found that meaning-recall tests tended to predict reading proficiency more strongly than recognition tests (McLean et al., 2020), though later reanalysis suggested that this effect weakens once item- and participant-level variance are controlled (Nicklin et al., 2025). Even so, recall-oriented learning approaches such as word-card study remain valuable for promoting robust form-meaning links through active retrieval.

Building on this, research in vocabulary assessment highlights the value of contextualized recall practice. Stoeckel et al. (2023) demonstrated that testing words within extended contexts increases reliability and aligns more closely with authentic lexical use, while promoting deeper engagement with form-meaning relationships. This evidence informed the present project's design, which used bilingual, contextually grounded, example sentences to support vocabulary consolidation. The deliberate study of vocabulary using word cards has strong theoretical and empirical support (Nation, 2013; Wilkinson, 2020). Word cards can promote repeated retrieval, which supports long-term retention and strengthens form-meaning connections (Nakata, 2013). However, the effectiveness of flashcard-based learning depends not only on retrieval itself, but also on the design features of the cards and learning system. Recent work highlights the importance of factors such as retrieval formats, lexical information richness, and sequencing (Kaitsu & Nakata, 2025). Although Wilkinson found that premade cards may yield more study repetitions than self-made ones, the current project sought to combine the efficiency of standardized premade cards with the cognitive depth of rich, contextualized examples.

Nakata (2020) emphasized retrieval practice and spaced review as the key mechanisms driving durable vocabulary learning. He suggested that word cards might also include L1 translations, short contextual sentences, and affix information, though he noted limited empirical support for contextual effects and cautioned against adding too much information that could increase cognitive load. The present project follows some of these principles by including L1 translations and concise bilingual examples that aid recall without overloading learners. For the university's lowest-proficiency students, such examples may also enhance engagement and enjoyment—helping sustain motivation even when linguistic gains are incremental.

To prioritize high-frequency, pedagogically essential items, the project drew on the New General Service List (NGSL; Browne et al., 2013), a corpus-based list of the most frequent English words across a wide range of contemporary texts. The first 700 items represent the most frequent and widely applicable English words, forming a manageable foundation for lower-proficiency learners. This subset served as the in-house Level 1 set, from which 437 instructional word cards were developed to consolidate core vocabulary before advancing to less frequent items. The selection and reduction process of items is described in detail in the Methodology section. The cards were further designed to expand learners' lexical networks and sustain motivation

through humor, relatable contexts, and familiar cultural references—features that foster attention (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010), autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 2000), and emotional engagement (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2021). In short, the design aims to integrate the memory benefits of deliberate retrieval with the motivational affordances of contextual and cultural relevance, supporting both efficient vocabulary acquisition and sustained learner engagement. Attention can be promoted through contextualized, meaningful examples; autonomy through opportunities for learner choice and self-paced review; and emotional engagement through personally relevant or culturally resonant content. These principles informed the present project's materials design.

Methodology

Word Selection and Card Design

As shown in Table 2, definitions and example sentences developed collaboratively by Japanese faculty in shared spreadsheets reflected their own experiences as advanced, motivated learners and frequent dictionary users. While this approach produced accurate and detailed examples, the resulting materials proved text-dense and less accessible for beginning learners, particularly those in the university's Level 1 group, corresponding to students studying the first 700 words of the NGSL, the institution's lowest proficiency band.

Table 2 *Example of Previously Developed NGSL Vocabulary Materials (State, Frequency Rank 199)*

Part of Speech	Definition	Example (English)	Example (Japanese)
noun [countable]	the <u>mental</u> , <u>emotional</u> , or <u>physical condition</u> that a person or thing is in	He's concerned about his mother's state of health.	彼は母親の健康状態を心配しています。 (Kare wa hahaoya no kenkō jōtai o shinpai shite Imasu.)
noun [countable]	an <u>organized</u> political community forming part of a country	The <u>hurricane</u> swept across the <u>southern</u> states of the US.	そのハリケーンは、合衆国南部のいくつかの州の上を通り抜けました。 (Sono hurricane wa, gasshūkoku nanbu no ikutsu ka no shū no ue o tōrinukemashita.)
verb [transitive]	to <u>formally</u> write or say something, especially in a careful and clear way	The facts are <u>clearly</u> stated in the report.	それらの事実はその報告書の中で明瞭に述べられています。 (Sorera no jijitsu wa sono hōkoku-sho no naka de meiryō ni nobe rarete imasu.)

Note. Underlined words are beyond NGSL 700.

The card design emphasized repeated retrieval through structured review cycles, reflecting well-established findings that retrieval practice supports long-term retention through spaced practice and active recall (Nation, 2013). Contextualized bilingual examples were included to deepen processing by linking lexical form, meaning, and communicative use. Motivational considerations also informed the materials: humor, local settings, and familiar cultural references were used to enhance interest (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2021), while the card-based format was intended to support learner autonomy through self-paced, independent study (Deci & Ryan, 2000). As one example, for the word *individual*, the card drew on a universal first-year living context at Shōzan University—the student dormitory units—and incorporated light humor through a short exchange:

English dialogue:

“There are eight *individual* rooms in the units in Zozan Dormitory.”

“Oh, one person per room?”

“No, two.”

“Oh...”

Japanese dialogue:

「象山寮のユニットには、8つの個室があります。」

「ああ、1人1部屋？」

「いえ、2人。」

「ああ…」

Working with two L1-Japanese research assistants (RAs), we began with a comprehensive review of NGSL 1-700. We independently coded each word as *keep* or *delete*, then discussed every entry in detail. Reference materials (e.g., Collins COBUILD Advanced Learner's Dictionary, ALC), supplemented by generative tools (e.g., ChatGPT) for context testing, were used. Many decisions were revisited as we clarified meaning and pedagogical value.

We excluded items assumed known, including function words (e.g., *the*, *at*), common nouns (e.g., *house*, *car*), high-frequency verbs (e.g., *have*, *do*), and basic adjectives and adverbs (e.g., *good*, *very*). A small number of items were deliberately excluded (e.g., *death*), while some high-frequency expressions (e.g., *according to*) were treated as multiword units rather than as standalone headwords (e.g., *accord*) when their collocational or formulaic nature made them especially useful. In total, 398 items were not selected. During dictionary checks, we identified many polysemous items (e.g., *wonder*, *figure*) and decided to represent different senses on separate cards.

The resulting cards were then designed through several prototypes. In the final version, the front displays the target word in large type; while the reverse presents (a) the Japanese equivalent on a light blue background and (b) two parallel example sentences, one in English and its Japanese translation (Figure 1). Part of speech was not included to avoid evoking negative associations with grammar study. When a polysemous word appeared on multiple cards, a large asterisk on the front signaled that other meanings exist. See Table 3 for examples with one polysemous word.



Figure 1 Front (left) and Back (right) of One Card, Representing the Word Compare.

Note. “compare” = 比較する (hikaku suru).

Japanese example sentence: *Pug to French bulldog o kurabeta koto aru? Nani ga chigau? N... , mimi kana?*

Table 3 Polysemous NGSL Word: state (Frequency Rank 199) Represented on Multiple Cards

Japanese Meaning	Sample English Sentence	Parallel Japanese Translation
州, 国家 (shū, kokka)	Washington DC is not in Washington state.	ワシントン DC は ワシントン州ではありません。(Washington DC wa Washington shū de wa arimasenn,)
状態 (jōtai)	My room was in a perfect state ... until I got a puppy.	部屋は完璧な状態だった…子犬を飼うまでは。(Heya wa kanpeki na jōtai datta ... koinu o kau made wa.
はっきりと言う (hakkiri to iu)	Luffy stated “I will become the Pirate King!”	「海賊王に俺はなる！」と ルフィ はっきりと言いました。(“Kaizokuō ni ore wa naru!” to Luffy hakkiri to iimasita.)

Note. Example sentences include words beyond the first 1,000 NGSL items (e.g., *king*, *pirate*, *puppy*). These were retained to preserve naturalness and context but were limited where possible.

Development and Implementation

The final dataset was organized in a spreadsheet (Numbers). Using ReportLab in Python, formatted PDF sheets were generated, with eight cards per A4 page. Cards were printed double-sided on heavy matte stock (150 g/m² matte stock) and trimmed using an industrial paper cutter for durability and consistency. Each complete set contained 437 cards corresponding to the refined Level 1 list (NGSL 1–700). Table 4 summarizes the distribution of cards within 100-word frequency bands. The overall lexical density was highest across the 301–700 range. Across all bands, 105 of the 437 cards represented words with multiple meanings. The total of 302 unique headwords (words) accounted for 43% of the first 700 words of the NGSL (corresponding to the university’s Level 1 list).

Table 4 *Distribution of Targeted Items by 100-word Frequency Band*

NGSL band	Total cards	Monosemous words ^a	Polysemous words ^b	Cards from polysemous words	Total unique words
1–100	32	5	11	27	16
101–200	48	10	16	38	26
201–300	60	22	16	38	38
301–400	84	31	23	53	54
401–500	63	39	11	24	50
501–600	73	39	15	34	54
601–700	77	51	13	26	64
Totals	437	197	105	240	302

Note. ^aMonosemous words correspond one-to-one with cards. ^bPolysemous words correspond to one distinct sense of the word per card. For example, appear (“のように見える”, *no yō ni mieru*) and appear (“現れる”, *awarareru*) were treated as separate cards.

At the beginning of Quarter 1 (April–May 2025), students ($N \approx 250$) completed a paper-based NGSL level check adapted from the New General Service List Test (NGSLT) (Stoeckel & Bennett, 2015). Although aligned with five in-house NGSL bands (Levels 1–5), the diagnostic was limited to Levels 1–3. Each student began at Level 1 and continued until scoring below 90%, determining their starting level for independent study. Although this restriction created a ceiling effect which prevented immediate placement into the highest NGSL bands for some students, it kept the diagnostic manageable and confirmed that higher-proficiency students had mastered the core NGSL before advancing to specialized lists. Level-check results were announced the following day. At that time, students were informed that an NGSL test for their level would be administered in the first period on the first day of the end-of-quarter examination week six weeks later.

During Quarter 1, students engaged in independent vocabulary study using standard program resources. These included NGSL word lists provided in the Year 1 English Language Program handbook, level-specific Quizlet sets, downloadable study sheets, and dictionary-based word lists previously developed by the Japanese faculty team. At the end of the quarter, all students completed an 80-point test at their assigned NGSL level, divided equally between written receptive and productive items. A score of 80% or higher was required to progress to the next NGSL level in the following quarter and contributed 10% to the course grade; students who did not reach the threshold received partial credit (0–7.9%) based on test performance and remained at the same level. In April, 57 students were assigned to Level 1, with 19 remaining after the Quarter 1 test (end of May). The implementation phase began in Quarter 2 (June–July 2025), introducing the newly developed word cards to these 19 students (underlined figures in Table 5), who formed the focal group for the project's trial implementation.

Table 5 *Distribution of Year 1 Students by NGSL Level Through Quarter 2 (AY 2025)*

Level	April Level Check		End of Q1 Test (May)		End of Q2 Test (July)	
	<i>n</i>	Percentage	<i>n</i>	Percentage	<i>n</i>	Percentage
1	57	22.5%	19	7.5%	7	2.8%
2	87	34.4%	60	23.7%	41	16.3%
3	55	21.7%	73	28.9%	41	16.3%
4	54	21.3%	70	27.7%	93	37.1%
5	—		31	12.3%	56	22.3%
NAWL	—		—		13	5.2%
	253		253		251	

Note. Percentages reflect the proportion of Year-1 students placed in each NGSL level at three checkpoints. The 19 Level-1 students who participated correspond to the lowest 7.5%, as measured by NGSL, of the cohort at the end of Q1.

During Quarter 2, the students joined three 60-minute training sessions led by two RAs. In Session 1 (Week 2), students received half of the 437 cards. One RA shared her English-learning story and introduced the materials in Japanese, while the other demonstrated strategies for spaced review and active recall. Students were instructed to use the cards regularly in small piles, separating known from unknown words, shuffling sets, and reflecting on each item with questions such as “Do I know this word? Can I use it?” Students then practiced collaboratively. Those absent received the cards with written instructions. In Session 2 (Week 3), students received the remaining cards and shared experiences using them. The informal atmosphere, supported by snacks, fostered engagement. A final reflection session was held in mid-July (Week 6), eight days before the Quarter 2 NGSL test.

Eighteen of the 19 eligible students participated at least once, including 14 twice, and nine in all three sessions. Attendance was voluntary but encouraged by instructors. At the Quarter 2 NGSL test, 12 of these 19 students (63%) passed, including 11 of the 14 who had attended two or more sessions. This tentatively suggests that guided exposure to the word cards may have contributed to improved outcomes. However, it is also possible that students who attended multiple sessions were already more motivated or more inclined toward independent vocabulary study. The Results section examines the vocabulary outcomes associated with this trial implementation.

Results

The following results summarize institutional-level trends and the outcomes of the 19-student trial. Year 1 students were broadly distributed across the first four NGSL levels in April (Table 5). By the end of July, more than one-quarter of the cohort had progressed to Level 5 or NAWL, while only a small group remained in the lowest band. In all, 57 students ($\approx 23\%$) had started at Level 1 in April, falling to 19 students ($\approx 8\%$) at the end of May, and then 7 ($\approx 3\%$) by the end of July. This pattern illustrates

the program's overall upward mobility and provides a context for examining how the lowest-proficiency students developed across the first semester. By the end of July, the proportion of students in the lowest NGSL level had declined from 23% to 3%, indicating substantial vocabulary growth across the cohort.

Table 6 displays the individual NGSL test data for the 19 NGSL Level 1 students. Paired-sample analyses were conducted to track vocabulary gains between Quarters 1 and 2, with effect sizes reported as dz , Cohen's d for paired-sample (within-subjects) comparisons. Productive scores ($dz = 0.66$, 95% CI [0.16, 1.15]) and total scores ($dz = 0.76$, 95% CI [0.24, 1.26]) showed clear within-subject improvements, whereas receptive scores were modest ($dz = 0.36$, 95% CI [-0.11, 0.82]). Given the small single-site sample ($N = 19$), these outcomes should be interpreted

Table 6 NGSL Level 1 Q1 and Q2 Results for the 19 Trial Participants

Name ^a	Q1			Q2		
	Receptive	Productive	Total	Receptive	Productive	Total
Airi	33	12	45	34	26	60
Miyu	22	19	41	28	22	50
Haruka	31	18	49	30	14	44
Nanami	33	24	57	30	31	61
Rina	32	21	53	33	17	50
Ayaka	32	21	53	34	2	36
Saki	32	27	59	30	25	55
Hinata	33	22	55	33	33	66
Yui	37	24	61	32	36	68
Nozomi	34	27	61	37	28	65
Kana	30	24	54	34	31	65
Riko	36	24	60	37	29	66
Kenta	37	24	61	36	38	74
Manami	33	26	59	37	34	71
Sayaka	35	26	61	38	34	72
Maho	26	17	43	35	29	64
Emi	36	26	62	36	35	71
Daichi	37	22	59	36	32	68
Souta	32	22	54	33	33	66
<i>M</i>	32.7	22.4	55.1	33.8	27.8	61.7
<i>SD</i>	3.8	3.9	6.5	2.9	8.9	10.2

Note. Maximum receptive and productive scores were 40 points each, with a pass threshold set at 80%. The trial participants scored substantially below the Year-1 cohort CASEC average ($M = 400$ vs. Y1 $M = 513$).

^aAll names are pseudonyms.

cautiously; however, they provide encouraging, practice-oriented evidence supporting the potential value of implementing similar materials and procedures in comparable classroom contexts. These outcomes indicate that vocabulary growth likely occurred among the lowest-proficiency students, though part of the productive-score increase may reflect familiarity with the test format. Nonetheless, the overall trend suggests that NGSL study—supported by word-card practice—may have contributed to the strengthening of form–meaning knowledge of high-frequency vocabulary.

Although no formal qualitative data were collected, informal observations during and after training sessions appeared to indicate generally high levels of student engagement. Participants were often seen laughing as they studied the cards, expressing curiosity or enjoyment, and several remarked that they wished they had had such cards when they were younger. Many of the 19 students seemed to use the cards independently in open study areas near faculty offices. A few students mentioned that some cards were challenging, particularly when a single word represented one sense of a polysemous item. Overall, the RAs and several colleagues perceived that students interacted positively with the materials. Students also reported informally that they reviewed and sorted the cards independently, creating “known” and “unknown” piles, shuffling, and revisiting them regularly. While the frequency of such behaviors remains unknown, these accounts may suggest emerging self-regulated learning habits supported by the materials. From a theoretical perspective, the use of contextualized, culturally familiar examples aligns with prior work emphasizing the role of interest and relevance in sustaining engagement (e.g., Mercer & Dörnyei, 2021). However, a more systematic study is needed to examine how such contextual features relate to learner motivation and vocabulary development.

Discussion

This project illustrates how contextualization and retrieval-based design can be implemented in a university setting to support lower-proficiency learners. The materials combined deliberate retrieval practice with contextualized examples that were humorous, locally relevant, or tied to familiar media, reflecting principles emphasized in motivational and engagement-focused theories of language learning (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2021). Theoretically, the inclusion of such contextual features aligns with accounts suggesting that affective engagement can support sustained attention during vocabulary study. At the same time, the regular retrieval and recycling of items during repeated review cycles are consistent with well-established explanations of how retrieval practice strengthens form–meaning links and supports long-term retention. Together, these design elements suggest that vocabulary materials may benefit not only from repetition, but also from meaningful and contextually resonant examples that support sustained learner engagement over time.

From an instructional perspective, this project illustrates the potential value of embedding meaningful input within vocabulary materials. In this sense, the NGSL card project described in this study highlights how small-scale, instructor-generated interventions can complement broader institutional programs. Within the English Language Program (ELP), the Fluency Team systematically monitors NGSL progress. This structure enabled the author to identify underperforming individuals early,

design a targeted support tool with the assistance of two RAs, observe what appeared to be measurable progress, troubleshoot, and integrate the resulting approach more broadly within the ELP's instructional framework. As advanced L2 users, the RAs brought perspectives on language learning and use that enriched both the examples and their cultural framing. Their metalinguistic awareness, firsthand experience as English learners, and roles as L1-cultural informants infused the materials with authenticity and contextual relevance that a team of L1-English speakers alone likely could not have achieved. The collaboration between their insights and the author's knowledge of pedagogy and TESOL resulted in materials that were not only linguistically accurate but also attuned to the lived experiences of the learners they were designed for. These observations underscore the potential value of targeted vocabulary-support initiatives within broader instructional frameworks, particularly for lower-proficiency learners.

However, the project also required substantial time, approximately 300 hours shared by the instructor and two research assistants, which may limit feasibility in most settings. Moreover, because many contextual examples referred to local settings or to well-known cultural products (e.g., anime, television, or film characters), the materials are not easily scalable. All sentences were written originally by the research team, but about 30% include references to trademarked or copyrighted entities; for instance, for the word *several*, the card featured a reference to a popular donut brand, "*I ate several Pon de Ring donuts for dinner.*" "*Dinner!?*". Such example sentences, while wholly original, contain brand or character names and therefore cannot be distributed publicly. Of the 437 cards, approximately 70% contain no such references and are suitable for sharing as supplementary material (NGSL Level 1 Shareable Subset).

Despite these constraints, the project's emphasis on local authenticity and cultural resonance illustrates how tightly tailored materials can heighten learner motivation. Instructors in other contexts could adapt this approach by selecting locally meaningful examples, creating concise bilingual sentences, and using either physical or digital cards to encourage repeated retrieval. Even small sets of such materials can supplement existing curricula or support independent study. The experience highlights the value of teacher-led design that responds to students' lived environments, even when broader dissemination is limited. In this sense, the development process and design framework may serve as a practical model for educators seeking to balance contextual relevance with resource efficiency in their own settings.

Conclusion

The present findings should be interpreted with caution. Although vocabulary test data were available from the university's NGSL assessments, these were not part of a controlled pre/post design, and no motivational surveys were conducted. Observations therefore provide only limited insight into how learners engaged with the materials. Nor were any quantitative data gathered on individual study time or frequency of card use, limiting insight into how often and how systematically students engaged with the materials. The small sample ($N = 19$) and single-site context further constrain the extent to which these results can be generalized.

Future research should employ a more systematic design, combining motivation scales and logs or app-based tracking of study behavior to assess how affect and usage patterns relate to vocabulary growth. Ongoing work with the two RAs is extending the card project to NGSL Level 2, and subsequent iterations will explore creating 100-word-band subsets—condensed, pedagogically balanced card sets (approximately 20–60 words each) designed to support focused, incremental mastery. Beginning in Academic Year 2026, the intention is to provide these cards, with short training sessions, to Level 1 and Level 2 students, who together typically comprise just over half of all first-year students at Shōzan University, immediately after the NGSL level check rather than at the end of Quarter 1. Earlier introduction may encourage enhanced self-regulatory study habits, sustained engagement, and more consistent vocabulary development across the semester, thereby supporting subsequent gains in TOEIC Reading performance.

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