



FICT-Supplemented Language Learning with LingoEducation

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Abstract

In today's language learning the integration of state-of-the-art technologies is increasingly becoming a necessity.

For students living in a non-native environment, the development of their lexical knowledge has been a monotonous activity, especially when learning words out of context.

For the teacher it is always a question how to make students expand their vocabulary without losing motivation and make vocabulary learning more engaging, interesting and relevant.

LingoEducation can be the tool that gives the answer to these questions.

Instead of manually typing in a word in an online dictionary when reading articles on the Internet, the student simply double clicks on the word and LingoEducation gives the definitions and the translation.

Synonyms and antonyms as well as information on how common the word is are also provided. The student can also hear the word pronounced. Then the word is automatically saved to a personal word list where it can be reviewed and mastered through automatically generated flashcards and quizzes.

In addition, the teacher - with the help of a teacher's page in LingoEducation - has access to the students' word lists for each class assignment. By seeing which words the students selected the teachers gains insight into how difficult the reading was, the level of vocabulary knowledge, the context in which the difficulties arose, and the suitability of that article for the class - all of which can inform the teacher's strategy and makes it easy to generate tests.

LingoEducation is a programme that can be easily integrated into language teaching with a special focus on business vocabulary as an invaluable tool for a teacher of economic English. The case study and empirical evidence presented in the study are based on personal experience.

LingoEducation has proved especially useful to support the preparation of students for the economic language exam, when learning words in authentic contexts relevant to the professional topics in a relatively short period of time is given top priority.

I am a teacher of English at Corvinus University Budapest and I head the English Section.

In our Institute the students mostly learn economic English to prepare for the Corvinus economic language exam. This is a state-accredited exam and complies with the requirements of the Common European Framework of Reference.

At present our students have two terms at University to prepare for the economic English language exam. When they start the course, they mostly have a relatively stable, intermediate level language knowledge, meaning that "they can understand the main ideas of a complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, they can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity without strain for either part and can write clear, detailed texts giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view." (1) As they already have a working knowledge of English, the challenge for them is to learn to use their skills in an economic context. To achieve this aim, the biggest focus of the preparatory course, besides practicing the skills necessary for performing the tasks at the exam, is on extending the size, range and control of their economic vocabulary. Learner needs should be as close to real-life needs



as possible. Therefore authenticity was of primary importance for the exam developers, integrating as many tasks as possible to expose students to real life situations.

On both the oral and the written parts the examinees are required to read authentic newspaper articles. Therefore, throughout the year the students work with a lot of articles downloaded from the Internet.

As we do not spend time in class reading and translating articles, the students are asked to process them in three ways.

- They should look up the unknown words and learn them
- Answer the comprehension questions
- Prepare for an oral summary of the article

In order to perform these tasks, they are required to obtain a diverse scope of economic terminology that corresponds to the content of the texts, either when reproducing them orally in their own words or performing the reading comprehension task.

In order to avoid repetition, they have to be able to interpret the text with a varied economic vocabulary, including idioms. Using inadequate words or paraphrases as well as general language words might distort the meaning of the message of the original text.

The question arises how the teacher can – in a relatively short period of time - extend specialized vocabulary.

Effectiveness can definitely be enhanced by introducing new resources and a greater diversity of methods. This is why our staff have decided to integrate LingoEducation into our teaching programme with a focus on lexical development.

The students can use Lingo on their own after installing it. When reading articles on the Internet, instead of manually typing in a word in an online dictionary they simply double click on the unknown word and LingoEducation gives the definitions and the translation. Synonyms and antonyms as well as information on how common the word is are also provided. The student can also hear the word pronounced. Then the word is automatically saved to a personal word list where it can be reviewed and mastered through automatically generated flashcards and quizzes.

The fact that the new language learning generation uses the Internet on a daily basis which is easily accessible for them through their smartphones makes it clear why LingoEducation can be a favourite tool of expanding lexical knowledge.

According to research, students need to meet a word at least seven times before it is integrated into their vocabulary. LingoEducation provides students with the ability to regularly go back to the selected words and see them in context. In addition, it boosts interactivity and raises the awareness and responsibility of the students for their own learning.

Research has also shown that students will have great difficulty figuring out the meaning of new words unless they can understand 90 to 95 percent of the words in the text. With LingoEducation, this threshold is reduced since students can easily access the meaning of unknown words. It also means that students can easily explore a broader range of authentic text and discover new vocabulary.

Because defining words and collecting vocabulary is automatic, students do not have to interrupt their reading to look up a word, and they are relieved of the tedious work of then writing down the word and its definition to study later. This makes them more likely to explore (and learn) new vocabulary.

A more controlled way of using Lingo works through the teacher's page. Here, the teacher can create a class at the beginning of the term and have all the students sign in. This can serve as a surface for written communication between the members of the class, using it for sharing information and sending messages.

The teacher can then easily create reading assignments, including instructions, highlighting relevant vocabulary and reading comprehension questions. Start and end dates can be set for each assignment. Before finalizing the assignment the teacher can check whether LingoEducation gives the proper definition and Hungarian equivalent that fits in the context. The students are then automatically notified of on the assignment start date. New assignments are automatically saved so that the teacher can reuse them for another class or in another term.

The teacher has access to the students' word lists for each class assignment. By seeing which words the students selected the teachers gain insight into how difficult the reading was, the level of vocabulary knowledge, the context in which the difficulties arose, and the suitability of that article for the class - all of which can inform the teacher's strategy and make it easy to generate tests.

A further motivation might arise from the fact that students are aware that the teacher has access to information how they have dealt with the article. They are also more interested in the next meeting



with the teacher because they know that the vocabulary discussed will be based on their actual needs as revealed by LingoEducation.

The teacher can decide on the content of the vocabulary test on the basis of several statistics provided by LingoEducation such as the words selected by the students, how many students selected each of the words, the frequency range of the selected vocabulary, and the context in which the selected words occurred. The teacher can also see how useful each article actually was in achieving the vocabulary goals of the class.

This spring our staff developed a new general language exam system for which our University has just gained accreditation. As LingoEducation has proved to be a useful tool in making lexical development more efficient, we are planning to treat it as an integrated part of the curriculum in our general language courses as well.

References

- [1] Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment.
Language Policy Unit, Strasbourg