Creating a Flexible System for the Explicit Teaching of Academic and Technical Vocabulary

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Abstract

Explicit (or isolated) vocabulary instruction leads to higher rates of learning (File & Adams, 2010) helps transfer vocabulary knowledge from receptive to productive knowledge (Lee, 2003) and improves the ability to work with different word forms. In this type of instruction, explicit attention is given to the features of particularly vocabulary items in isolation, away from integrating it with other activities where the primary focus is directed at understanding the meaning of a text. In an ideal system, an explicit vocabulary teaching strand works in conjunction with course materials so that learners have repeated exposure to the target vocabulary in different materials along with the explicit instruction. However, due to changes that happen in course books and other course materials, a static explicit vocabulary resource may quickly go out of alignment with other course materials, a situation that happened to the author about 18 months ago. Therefore, this presentation will illustrate the evolution of an explicit vocabulary teaching system from a static, academic (AWL based) vocabulary teaching resource to a flexible, adaptable academic and engineering based one. The presentation will highlight the four strands of the system: a vocabulary booklet, meaning-based vocabulary quizzes, form-based vocabulary quizzes and Quizlet review/ study materials. It will also show how, through the use of VBA enabled MsWord quiz templates and accompanying Excel files, it was possible to create a system that could be modified and resequenced whenever course materials were changed, providing a unique system where the vocabulary teaching resource align closely with the course materials allowing for higher rates of learning and deeper lexical knowledge. Samples of materials will be provided.

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