

Don't Just Say 'I See Tea': an Efficient, Meaningful Use of Web Applications in Vocabulary Teaching.

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Abstract

The right question...

Vocabulary acquisition is one of the most important elements in learning a language.

It is estimated that students need to learn approximately 6,000 words to reach some level of independence in any language. The question is: which words are we going to select and what is the most efficient way to help students learn and remember words?

Some questions spring to mind:

Some principles are being used in our classrooms; eg vocabulary teaching and evaluation in context. But what about word lists? And learning in pairs? Are they really inefficient?

Apparently, the most important element in language learning is not how it is presented, but whether it is embedded by repeated confrontation with the words at hand. So, how can we make sure this happens? And can we give our students some tools to do this for themselves?

Clearly, not all 6,000 words mentioned above can be learned inside the classroom. We will need to stimulate contact with the 'outside world', more particularly the language community of the target language. But how can we do that seeing that community may be thousands of miles away (except in L2-situations)?

Also, when students reach a higher level, we need to start selecting words that they consider useful (depending on their needs and wants), but how can we give an answer to that in a full classroom?

Finally, higher level-words tend to be much less frequent, so if we don't give them a boost, our learners will have to wait a whole year to come across a particular higher level word in a natural context. The question we will address is: how can we make use of the internet and web 2.0 applications to stimulate this?

The first answers...

In this workshop, we will begin with a number of do's and don'ts regarding vocabulary acquisition. We will decide together what are golden tips for efficient vocabulary teaching and learning.

With those tips in hand, we will search the net for texts, podcasts/vodcasts to explore their value for vocabulary teaching. We will first discuss how we would make a vocabulary exercise according to the principles decided upon: which words are we going to select and why? Will we opt for a productive or receptive exercise (or both and in what order)? What is the objective of the exercise: presentation of new words, repetition, embedding, fine tuning in a different context?

After that, we will explore the use of ICT even further: how can we make use of ICT and Web 2.0 to further pursue the golden rules we outlined at the start? How can we use ICT not just because it's attractive and modern, but because the net and the computer hold possibilities to really improve vocabulary learning?

We will show a number of web 2.0 applications that can be used to help analyse the frequency of the vocabulary in a text, to turn written text into speech so learners can learn words including their

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pronunciation, some applications to assemble useful words and make easy exercises (allowing students to train whenever necessary) and of course some applications to make quizzes, crosswords and other attractive exercises.