Chapter 104
A New Era of Applying CALL to Enhance EFL Learners' Lexical Knowledge

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ABSTRACT

This chapter provides an overview of several software programs, which can used to teach and acquire lexical knowledge. First, GSL Builder is aimed directly at supporting the acquisition of high frequency words. AWL Builder is generally used to develop knowledge of academic words. Shanbei provides opportunities for learning low-frequency words. Word Engine is specifically for learning the words needed for passing the TOEFL, IELTS, TOEIC, SAT, and GRE tests. CAVOCA takes learners through different stages of vocabulary development: deduction, consolidation, and long-term retention. V-admin enables teachers to keep track of their students' vocabulary development. The integration of these tools can facilitate EFL learners' vocabulary learning. Teacher beliefs concerning the role of technology for teaching vocabulary are important. Teachers should explore how to effectively integrate vocabulary building technology into their teaching practice. In the future, more effort needs to be made to creating a clearer conceptualization of computer-assisted vocabulary learning (CAVL).

INTRODUCTION

There is a consensus that a significant amount of vocabulary is essential for adequate language comprehension. For example, Nation (2006) proposed that understanding 6,000-7000 different word families is necessary for adequately comprehending spoken English and understanding 8,000-9,000 different word families is needed for adequately comprehending written texts. In developing learners' vocabulary, some previous studies focused on intentional learning, which is any learning activity that a learner undertakes with the intention of committing words into memory (Hu & Nation, 2000; Moskovsky, Jiang, Libert, & Fagan, 2015). However, the amount of class time available to learn every word explicitly is limited. In addition, native English speakers understand an average of 22,000 to 32,000 vocabulary words.

Advanced English learners have an average receptive vocabulary knowledge of 11,000 words (Nation, 2013). One must bear in mind that words in such large quantities cannot be learned solely by explicit vocabulary instruction.

Many words may have been picked up incidentally in an incremental way because the language learner may come across them frequently in a wide range of contexts. This may form learners' lexical repertoire, which helps them acquire other new words. Accordingly, researchers have resorted to incidental vocabulary acquisition, which refers to the acquisition of a word without the conscious intention to commit the word to memory (Hulstijn, 2013). However, the new words that can be incidentally acquired by students learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is limited (Schmitt, 2010). Consequently, some researchers (e.g., Pellicer-Sanchez & Schmitt, 2010; Teng & He, 2015) have recommended a learning method that combines incidental learning and explicit vocabulary exercises. They argue that, although reading does contribute to the incidental learning of vocabulary, a supplementary regime with explicit vocabulary-enhancing exercises yields more vocabulary gains. However, in a recent study conducted by Teng (2015a), combining incidental learning and explicit vocabulary exercises only led to partial word knowledge. In order to resolve this problem, researchers and teachers have increasingly invested more efforts in applying technology for teaching and learning vocabulary both inside and outside the classroom.

There are several reasons for this. First, some important low-frequency words occur rarely in authentic L2 input. This indicates that most learners will not have enough repetition from which they can acquire their word knowledge from context using an incremental learning process. Second, the immediate context of unknown words often does not contain the clues to its meaning. However, EFL learners seldom ascertain the wider contexts that cumulatively illustrate its semantic properties. Third, some authentic texts contains too many unknown words. Learners may encounter a lexical constraint in making contextual deduction of the word's meaning. Incidental acquisition of an unknown word is only possible when the learners can understand the context. For learners who need a thorough understanding of the context, a dense coverage is needed. In this case, the learners must have prior knowledge of most other words in the context. This presupposes that EFL learners need a large vocabulary and explains why such a large vocabulary size cannot be incidentally picked up by only sheer exposure to authentic English material. This suggests that effective learning of new words requires a conscious effort from the students (Schmitt, 2010).

The limited time available for this learning effort makes it imperative that a systematic plan for vocabulary learning be made an essential part of language courses. In this case, a careful analysis of what should be learned and which words should be learned are needed. This can be done through using technology. Thus, many EFL teachers have taken interest in the inclusion of computer-based technology in teaching English.

There has been a tremendous growth of computer-based technologies applicable to language learning in recent years. Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) has been defined as the search for and study of applications of the computer in language teaching and learning (Beatty, 2013). The main purpose of CALL is to help learners find ways for using computers to learn a language. More specifically, CALL is the use of computer technologies that promote language learning, including lexical learning, word recognition, speaking, writing, and reading performance. Therefore, language teachers are increasingly required to possess CALL expertise. This includes both practical skills and a thorough understanding of information technology theory. This may require teachers to design, implement, and evaluate CALL activities in their classrooms. Teachers may even be asked to supervise an institution-wide project or

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