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Accelerating Vocabulary Development with Software

According to Baumann, Kameʻenui, & Ash, students' vocabulary knowledge correlates strongly to their reading comprehension and overall academic success[1]. Robert Marzano's research has shown that direct vocabulary instruction on words related to content that will be on a test increases performance on that test from the 50th percentile to the 83rd.[2] However, Horst, Cobb & Meara found that a minimum of 8-12 exposures must occur for retention with normal students of any new concept or word[3]. Although teaching can make a real difference in vocabulary learning, the explicit teaching of vocabulary is not enough: a dedicated teacher can only teach perhaps 300-400 words per year[4]. The solution to providing enough exposures to new words to master a complete academic vocabulary is comprehensive, well-designed software.

Comprehensive Content

The vocabulary content for Flink software for Grades K-2 is based on high frequency words for those grade levels. The vocabulary list includes all of the words in three standard lists of high frequency words: Dolch, Fry 1,000 and EDL. Grade 3 and above words are drawn from a number of standard spelling and vocabulary approaches, plus any books included in the program.

Pedagogy

The Vocabulary words are organized into wordlists, containing from six words (for Kindergarten students) to twenty words (for third grade students). Since high frequency words do not follow any content-related pattern, we organize them randomly and do the same with Grade 3 words for the sake of consistency.

For each wordlist, students are provided with 5-12 different educational activities starting with simple flash cards and image matching at the Kindergarten level, and increasing in sophistication and difficulty as the levels rise. Each activity provides students with different practice with the words in the lists. The last activity is named "Show Words You Have Learned." This activity functions as an assessment.

Flink software therefore delivers all of Robert Marzano's six steps for vocabulary development[5]:
1. On the computer students see and hear words in context and with definitions,
2. Students define words and give examples of their use on computer-generated worksheets,
3. Students draw a picture of words when that is possible,
4. Students extend their knowledge of the word through various activities,
5. Students are constantly encouraged to discuss word meaning during the activities, and
6. Students play multiple games using the words they are learning for additional exposures.

Flink software products help students learn a complete academic vocabulary to support proficient reading and writing.

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[1] Baumann, J., Kameʻenui, E., & Ash, G. (2003). Research on vocabulary instruction: Voltaire redux. J. Flood, D. Lapp, J. Squire, & J. Jensen (Eds.), *Handbook of research on teaching the English language arts* (2nd ed., pp. 752-785). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

[2] Marzano, Robert J. (2004). *Building background knowledge for academic achievement: Research on what works in schools*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

[3] Horst, M., Cobb, T., & Meara, P. (1998). Beyond A Clockwork Orange: Acquiring second language vocabulary through reading. *Reading in a Foreign Language*, *11*, 207–223.

[4] Beck, I. L., & McKeown, M. G. (2007). Different ways for different goals, but keep your eye on the higher verbal goals. In R. K. Wagner, A. E. Muse, & K. R. Tannenbaum (Eds.), *Vocabulary acquisition: Implications for reading comprehension* (pp. 182–204). New York: Guilford.

[5] Op. Cit. Marzano (2004)

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