

## EVOC STRATEGY: ELECTRONIC OR TECHNOLOGY-BASED STRATEGY OF TEACHING VOCABULARY

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**Abstract :** Vocabulary is the foundation of language. In a nutshell, vocabulary is significant because it's the basis of all language. "Vocabulary, as one of the knowledge areas in language, plays a great role for learners in acquiring a language" (Cameron, 2001). Without developing it, almost no one can achieve success in language learning. In other words, as Harmon, Wood & Keser (2009) as well as Linse (2005) mentioned that "Vocabulary is an important aspect of their language development." Therefore, it is important to teach vocabulary in primary schools as it would be the foundation of language learning.

**Key words:** evoc, primary school, technology, strategy, acquiring, vocabulary.

There are several ways of teaching vocabulary, but when it comes to the era we are living teachers must think about the new, interesting and appropriate methods. Because, nowadays learners are different from previous ones, almost all of them are interested in modern and technology-based lessons than the traditional teaching styles. An "eVoc strategy" is an electronic or technology-based strategy that teachers can use to develop students' vocabulary learning and interest in words. We use the term eVoc both to highlight that the strategies rely on digital tools and resources and to suggest the evoking of learning potential that is possible when technology and media are part of the instructional mix.

Dudeny and Hockly argue that technology has been in education arguably ever since teachers started to use the blackboard (Dudeny & Hockly, 2007, p. 7) or any kind of recording device. In the last years we have been able to observe an intensive rise in using technology in education which does not involve only computers but also smartphones, tablets, Internet and all other modern tools of the 21st century. Dudeny and Hockly remember the idea that many teachers say that they are too old for technologies or that the technologies are redundant for today's education. But in fact technologies are all around us whether we want it or not (Dudeny & Hockly, 2007, p. 7). The most modern technologies of the 21st century found their way into almost every part of each industry. Among the industries that push technology forward the most belong the military or the health care industry but the one we get in touch the most with is the entertainment industry. Entertainment industry has changed dramatically over the past few years with the boom of computers and Internet. Now since most students of the western world are in touch with modern technologies and they know how to work with them, the time has come for technologies to be in the education industry as well. They can provide many alternative ways of looking at education (Saettler, 2004, p. 154) and help improve the old methods and evolve the new methods of teaching. Technologies in education are not limited only to the space of the classroom but have the ability to reach out beyond the walls of the classroom and change many free time activities into educational activities. Last but not least they provide the option to use one's time more efficiently because we can carry our own small classroom anywhere we go in our mobile devices.



- Are there keywords or ideas that are left out?
- What superordinate terms reflect the main ideas?

As students manipulate the word cloud's layout, color, and font, they integrate verbal and visual representations, strengthening the multimedia learning effect (Fadel & Lemke, 2008) while developing an important digital literacy skill in our visual society.

For some students, the creative design aspect serves as the hook to engage them in meaning making; for others, it is the words themselves that entice them to explore meanings and relationships. Although Wordles can be published to the public gallery and printed, another option is to use a screen capture program to save the Wordle as an image, creating a bank of images on your desktop or school server. They can then be inserted into a document, PowerPoint, class blog, or other text.

WordSift (opens in a new window) is another free word cloud tool available on the Internet. Like Wordle, a word cloud is created based on text that is cut and pasted into the application. Although WordSift does not support artistic design of the display, it offers important learning supports. Each word can be clicked on to show a collection of related images, a word map, and a listing of sentences from the text that present the word in different contexts. WordSift also sorts words by difficulty and identifies academic words. Note that both Wordle and WordSift support several different languages, a feature particularly helpful to ELs (Adesope, Lavin, Thompson, & Ungerleider, 2010).

### **eVoc strategy 2: Take a digital vocabulary field trip**

In the original vocabulary field trip (Blachowicz & Obrochta, 2005), the teacher begins with a large poster of a topic, such as weather. Students are seated on the carpet, and the teacher leads a field trip that includes having students observe and record what they saw as they read books and other materials. As students volunteer weather words, the teacher records them on sticky notes or tag board and puts them up beside the poster. After the observations are concluded, the teacher returns the students' attention to the words, repeating them and linking them to the poster. Next, students sort the weather words into conceptually related groups and engage in other semantic activities.

Teachers can create a digital version of a vocabulary field trip using a free online program called TrackStar (trackstar.4teachers.org). Like the popular WebQuest (Dodge, 1995), TrackStar allows you to collect a series of websites and annotate them so that students follow the online journey.

On the left side of the figure you can see the questions and multiple websites that we selected to guide students in finding out about weather in Alaska, where the Iditarod takes place. We selected a context where weather is extreme to heighten students' interest and to provide a dramatic contrast to their own local weather. We begin with a website featuring photos and video of dogsledding in Alaska and asked students to respond with descriptions of the weather conditions.

Next, students visit a website on the aurora borealis and look for connections between the aurora and Alaskan weather. They complete the virtual field trip with a visit to a website on weather comparisons, where they examine the differences between local weather and Alaskan weather. Throughout this process, they visit several teacher-selected websites and gain knowledge about words through multiple exposures in different contexts and through different media, including reading, viewing, writing, and conversation.

### eVoc strategy 3: Connect fun and learning with online vocabulary games

No list of technology applications for vocabulary would be complete without mention of the vocabulary games that are available for free on the Internet. We recommend two sites that offer a variety of activities to engage students in playing with words and word meanings: [Vocabulary Games \(opens in a new window\)](#) and [Vocabulary \(opens in a new window\)](#). Games include crossword puzzles, picture-word matches, word scrambles, and 8 Letters in Search of a Word (a game that can draw you in unexpectedly as you race to create as many words as possible from eight letters within the time limit). The games are supplemented with themed word lists, test preparation items, and activities on prefixes and suffixes. These sites can be bookmarked for students' independent practice and can provide a basis for whole-group instruction.

### eVoc strategy 4: Have students use media to express vocabulary knowledge

The previous eVoc strategies all require student interaction, from manipulating a visual word map to taking an online vocabulary field trip. This strategy focuses on students' vocabulary representations in multiple modes-writing, audio, graphic, video, and animation (Nikolova, 2002; Xin & Rieth, 2001). The first set of examples draws on promising research with universally designed digital text (Dalton & Proctor, 2007), suggesting the benefit of having students develop word meaning as they read a definition, view graphics, listen to the word, write or audiotape a personal connection to the word, create a caption for a graphic, and complete an interactive word map (Proctor et al., 2007; Proctor, Uccelli, Dalton, & Snow, 2009). Figure 2 illustrates how students communicate word knowledge as they create a caption for an image. These types of activities offer students different modes of representation and expression and can be created with a variety of composing tools and formats, such as digital stories, photo essays, podcasts, and so on.

Figure 2: Students create captions to illustrate their understanding of contribute



Caption it! target word: contribute

#### Marcy's caption:

Kate: Look at the birds. They look like they need a place to nest!!!!!!!!!!

Bob: Maybe I will build them a bird house.....Oh look there is Joe!!!!!!!!!!

Joe: what are you doing??????????????????

Kate: building a bird house....Do you want to help????????????????????

Bob: we can all **contribute**!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

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**Lamar's caption:** the children in the picture are **contributing** their skills and working together to build a bird house

Note. From Dalton, B., Proctor, C.P., Snow, C.E., Uccelli, P., & Mo, E. (2008, September). Improving reading comprehension for struggling readers: Understanding the role of vocabulary

development, guided strategy use, and Spanish language supports in a digital reading environment. Final report to the U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences.

A multimedia composing and presentation tool that is often underused is PowerPoint. We have certainly seen many poor PowerPoint examples (e.g., the ubiquitous three bullet points and silly clip art approach). However, we have found that PowerPoint can be used creatively for expression. In addition to benefiting from reading and viewing multimodal representations of vocabulary, recent research suggests that students may also benefit from creating multimedia representations of words in PowerPoint slides that are hyperlinked together (Pritchard & O'Hara, 2009). Working with fifth graders, Bridget (first author) created an example of a multimedia glossary item for camouflage, a word from the science curriculum (see Figure 3).



Figure 3: Multimedia glossary example of camouflage using a PowerPoint template

create and revise their entries, they reflect on the word's meaning (What does this mean?), its representation (How does this particular graphic and sound effect illustrate this word?) and process (What images did you consider and discard?).

Students' glossary items can be combined into a master document and sorted by word to show multiple meanings and representations (Pritchard & O'Hara, 2009). Another approach to compiling students' individual work is to teach them how to hyperlink their slides so that a view of one version of a word includes hyperlinks to others' versions of that word. Although this example uses PowerPoint as the media format, these types of vocabulary collections can be created in different modes and published online as a word wiki or word blog. This kind of collaborative publication and engagement with an external audience is characteristic of successful multimedia learning (Fadel & Lemke, 2008). There really is no end to the creative possibilities when students use media to develop and celebrate the wonder of words.

#### **eVoc strategy 5: Take advantage of online word reference tools that are also teaching tools**

Many online word reference tools are also excellent teaching resources. For example, the [Visual Thesaurus website \(opens in a new window\)](#) complements its fee-based content with free information such as the Behind the Dictionary and Teachers at Work columns and teacher-created

themed word lists. Many use multiple distribution platforms to reach learners wherever they are. For example, the Back in School webpageof.com (dictionary.reference.com/studenthandbook) links to Facebook, has an iPhone application, a free toolbar application, a word of the day that is communicated on Twitter or as a text message on your mobile phone, and a free weekly word explorer audio podcast on iTunes.

In conclusion, we invite you to go digital with word learning. These 5 eVoc strategies use technology to support the wide range of vocabulary, direct instruction, active learning, and interest in words that we know are essential to vocabulary development. In a digital world, knowing how to use the tools and resources available online is part of becoming a strategic learner. We hope that this list provides a useful and evocative jumping off point for integrating technology and media into our learners vocabulary learning experience.

### References:

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