Vocabulary in Context: A Module for ESL Students

OLE: Springboard Module:
http://springboard.uakron.edu/d2l/home/4000791

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Description of the Project:

In the advanced reading class, students are required to develop higher academic reading skills. One of the most important of these skills is vocabulary in context. Students at this level need to improve their reading speed. Most of them are accustomed to using the dictionary a lot. Referring to the dictionary constantly disrupts the reading flow and makes one a slow reader. Therefore, in order to develop this skill, an entire module of this class is dedicated to this it. Since this skill is something you can develop on your own, discussing and practicing it in class won’t make much difference and could be time consuming. An online module would also give the students more time and more exercises to develop this skill.

The project is designed to be a stand-alone module where students spend two weeks practicing this skill, doing collaborative work and using what they learned to complete meaningful projects and activities. The module will be available on Springboard in the second month of the semester. The students will already be familiar with Springboard since we will have already used it in class.

TPACK’s Impact

When designing this module, I made sure to take TPACK into account. The content of this module which is developing vocabulary skills is of extreme importance to the students. They are about to begin their academic classes at the university level where they will be taking courses with native speakers who have higher linguistic skills. Reading is such an essential skill in college and reading speed is important for
success. Most ESL students are slow readers due to their limited vocabulary working knowledge. As an experienced reading teacher, I know how important this skill is at this level so I decided to dedicate this module for this skill to help students master it. Choosing to deliver this content online through a springboard unit comes from my understanding that this skill requires more time and more and more practice. Face to face instruction and practice is limited due to time constraints. Therefore, choosing this pedagogical technique is the most fitting.

The technology used for this project which is Springboard was chosen because it is the one tool that all students in class are used to and know how to use well. They won’t need any training, and they won’t have any difficulty in using it. It is also versatile, and I would be able to incorporate several types of exercises, activities and assessments.

**Design and Development:**

For this module, I designed a Springboard module. The site has four sections. The first section is the instruction. It consists of a 15 page powerpoint that explains the unit. The powerpoint is easy to navigate and includes lots of examples and exercises that ensures students have a clear understanding of the unit. The second section includes exercise activities. These activities are in the form of multiple choice questions. The students take these exercises and see their score, but they don’t count as part of their grade. The third section is the discussion part which has two parts. One is for a Voki presentation. Each student has to create a Voki account where they choose an avatar, record an introduction of themselves in which they use at least
10 new words they learned in the unit. They have to embed the Voki in the discussion. The second part of the discussion is a prompt that asks the students’ opinion. The students will express their opinion and share it with others and comment on one another. The final section is the assessment section in which students will take four tests to check their mastery of the unit.

**Project Use:**

The students can have access to this module anywhere as long as they have a computer (or a smartphone/tablet) and Internet connection. They are all added to the class list, so they need no special permission to access. The site is self-explanatory and easily navigable. Each section leads to the other through links and a head bar.

This module is part of the course. They students are required to study the material and be assessed on their progress. The students will also use this as a reference since vocabulary is such an important topic for ESL students. By using this project, students will also work collaboratively and benefit from peer feedback and peer instruction.

**Final Thoughts**

I enjoyed very much working on this project. I love teaching ESL academic reading and enjoy helping students improve their skills and prepare themselves for college reading. Working on the module comes from my determination to always find new tools to help my students learn and excel. Since technology has become ubiquitous, creating an online module that students can use anywhere and can refer to any time for future practice is such a great thing to be able to do.